



# Youth NFL FLAG Football PLAYBOOK

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
I Overview .....	1
II Offensive & Defensive Positions .....	2
III NFL FLAG Route Tree .....	3
IV <b>Single Back Formation</b> play examples .....	4
V <b>Spread Formation</b> play examples .....	5
VI <b>Bunch Formation</b> play examples .....	6
VII <b>Trips Formation</b> play examples .....	7
VIII <b>Twins Formation</b> play examples .....	8
IX <b>“I” Formation</b> play examples .....	9
X <b>Double Stack Set Formation</b> play examples .....	10
XI <b>Trips Stack Formation</b> play examples .....	11
XII <b>Twins Stack Formation</b> play examples .....	12
XIII <b>Single Set Formation</b> play examples .....	13
XIV <b>Run Plays</b> play examples .....	14
XV <b>Defensive Coverages</b> play examples .....	16

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# PLAYBOOK

## I Overview

Thank you for offering to coach NFL FLAG football this season. It is with volunteers like yourself that Lincoln Parks and Recreation can continue to offer fun-filled recreation for all.

Whether this is your first season coaching or you're coming back for another season, the following guidelines by the National Football League will, hopefully provide at outline and strong foundation for everyone's success. Once again, thank you, and have a fun season!

We recommend beginning coaching with a strong set of fundamentals before conquering complex setups. Some of the best football plays are actually quite simple.

What is a football formation? At the beginning of all offensive plays, players on the field must create an offensive formation at the line of scrimmage. Football formations give each player a specific location on the line of scrimmage to being their play. This prevents players from running into each other, crowding on the field, and promotes safety.

# II Offensive & Defensive Positions



Here's a closer look at NFL FLAG positions, and what skills are needed for both offense and defense.

## OFFENSE

Typically, teams set up in a formation with these five positions:

- A quarterback, a center, and the remaining players are wide receivers, running backs or a mix.

At the start of the play, the center snaps the football back to the quarterback, who can either hand it off or throw it. The quarterback cannot run with the ball. They must hand it off behind the line of scrimmage or complete a forward pass. But, if handed off, the quarterback can then run to receive a pass. The center is also allowed to run for a pass.

## DEFENSE

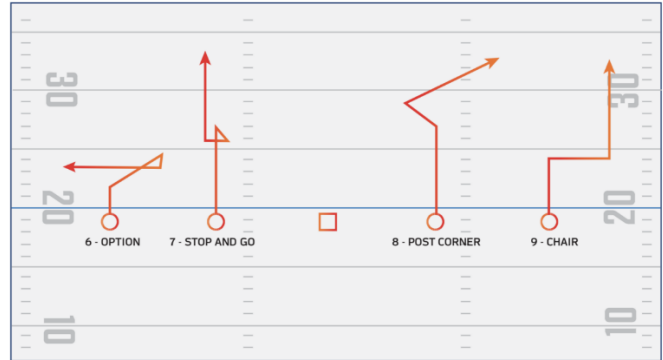
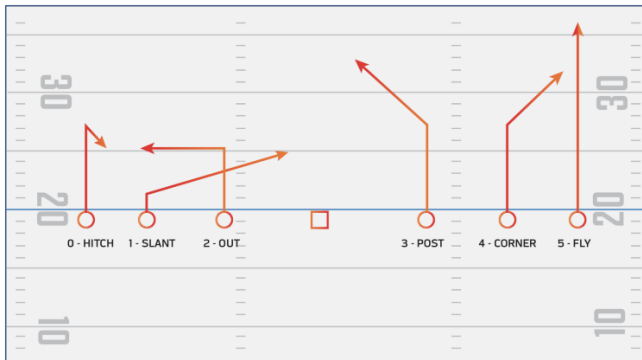
Without linemen in the mix, there are really two kinds of NFL FLAG defensive positions: rushers and defensive backs. Rushers try to get to the quarterback as quickly as possible, while defensive backs line up to face wide receivers, or even farther back as safeties.

What is a safety in NFL FLAG? The safety is an essential defensive position who acts as a catch-all, covering deep throws and any players who get loose. They're responsible for keeping offensive players in front of them and covering players who slip through the cracks.

Coaches typically teach both man-to-man and zone defensive strategies. But the most important skill players learn is the proper way to pull off opponent's flags. Players should be taught how to square up their opponent, where to align their head and knees, and what angles to take when pulling off flags.<sup>2</sup>

# III NFL FLAG Route Tree

Take a look at the offensive plays that follow. Each circle or O represents an individual player, with the square representing the quarterback. Where each player is located at the start of the play represents an offensive formation. The arrows reflect the plays, or routes, which provide an individualized map for each player in a formation. Let's dive into individual routes that will give you enough knowledge and context to create new, slick NFL FLAG plays of your own.



These images showcase ten different routes that can be used on offense.

- 0 = Hitch** In this hitch route, the player runs straight for seven yards then quickly pivots backwards for a couple yards. This throws off defenders running backwards to guard the player, and opens them up to a quick pass from the quarterback.
- 1 = Slant** During a slant, the player should run forward a couple yards, then cut at a near 45-degree angle forward.
- 2 = Out** In an out play, the player should run forward for a designated yardage, five in this case, and then cut on a direct 90-degree angle in either direction.
- 3 = Post** The player runs forward a designated amount, in this case seven yards, then cuts at a 45-degree angle to the center of the field. This route is reliable for critical yardage gain.
- 4 = Corner** This play proceeds straight for seven yards, then runs at a 45-degree angle toward the edge of the field. This route is optimal if you need the player to catch the ball and then step out of bounds during the final minute of a nail-biting game.
- 5 = Fly** The fly is the easiest route in the book. Run straight – and fast! Give this route to the player who has some serious wheels (and hands) to gain lots of yardage.
- 6 = Option** In this trick route, the player appears to begin a slant, heading toward the center of the field, but the cuts directly parallel toward the sideline. This is effective for needed short yardage.
- 7 = Stop & Go** This route is perfect for players who have a need for speed. First, they run straight for about seven yards and then stop. Just when the designated defensive player thinks they're covered, the player takes off again towards the end zone.
- 8 = Post Corner** This route mixes the magic of the post route with a corner route. The player runs straight for seven yards, then cuts to the center of the field. Once their guard is still, they break out toward the corner of the field.
- 9 = Chair** This player runs forward for about four yards, then cuts parallel to the side of the field. Instead of like stopping like an out route, they shoot straight up the field toward the end zone.

# IV SINGLE BACK play examples

The single back formation is built with one receiver side of the center and one a few yards behind the quarterback.

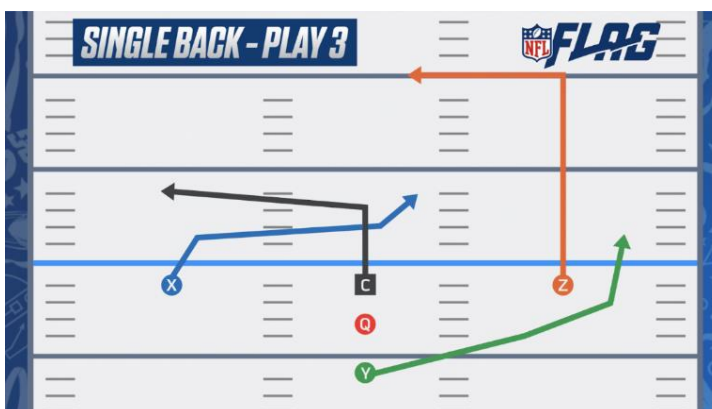


Upon hike, the two side receivers –X and Y – do a post route, cutting toward the center. Meanwhile, receiver Y does a corner route once they cross the line of scrimmage. If the receivers don't appear open, the center can then release and do a corner route as well. **SAFETY TIP: Always decide which receiver is going to move first if their paths are set to cross. You don't want anyone bumping heads!**



After the ball is hiked, receiver Z does a quick sidestep around the defender, then does a fly route – perfect for long yardage. The Y receiver does a slant and then cuts toward the sideline, occupying the space that should be open from the defender shifting backward to cover the fly route.

Meanwhile, receiver X and the center do respective post and corner routes to cut off their defenders.

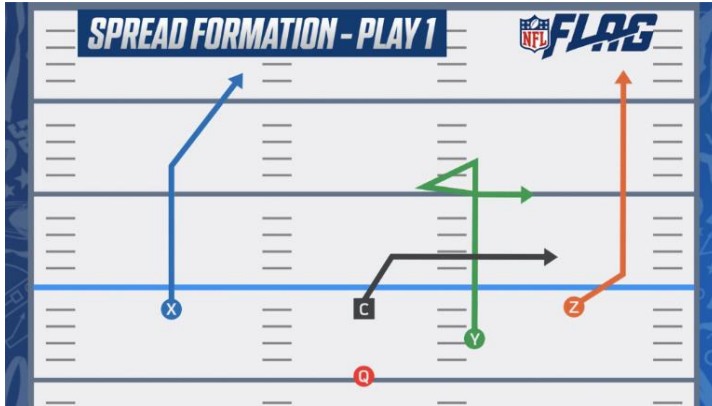


**Single-Back Criss-Cross:** In this play, two receivers start at the line of scrimmage, equal lengths apart. An additional receiver starts a couple yards behind the quarterback. Upon the snap, the center and the left receiver perform reverse slants, slightly staggered. This cuts off their respective defensive guards, opening them up for quick yardage. The receiver on the right side of the quarterback performs an in route (opposite of an out route), at about 10

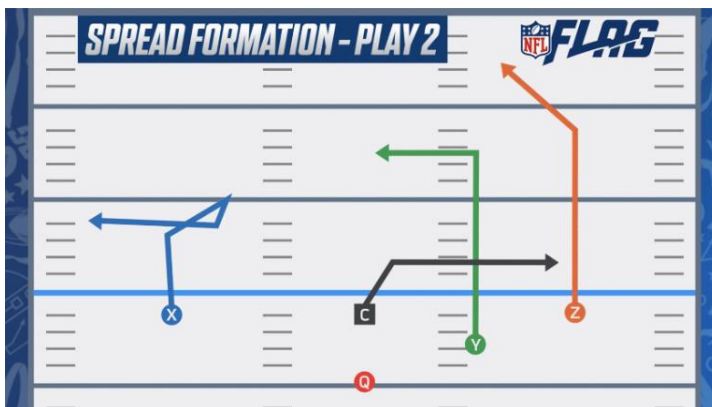
yards. It's recommended to throw to this receiver if a first down is needed or the receiver is wide open. Lastly, the receiver stacked behind the quarterback runs toward the outside of the field and up the field. Because this receiver is stacked behind the line of scrimmage, it allows more time for the player to get open before they are met by their respective defensive guard.

# V SPREAD FORMATION play examples

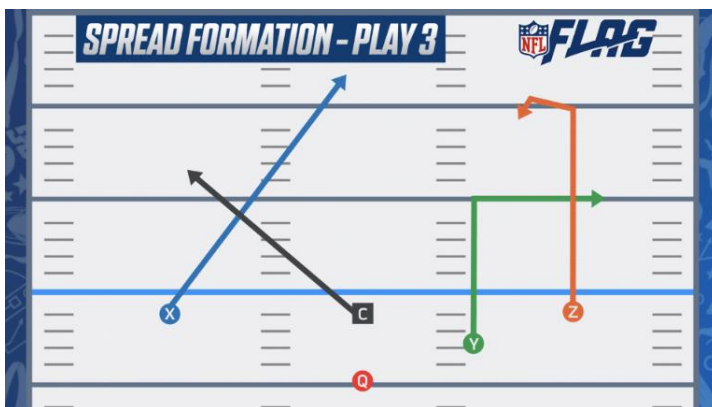
In the spread formation, all three receiver are essentially on the line of scrimmage – with one starting a couple yards behind – allowing for a slight delay in routes that will catch defenders off-guard.



On hike, receiver Z does a juke around the defenseman and a fly route for long yardage. Receiver Y then does an option route toward the right sideline. The player will find themselves in the empty spot from the far receiver pushing the defense back. The center also pushes toward the right sideline for further options. Have all the defensemen now shifted right? No worries, use receiver X for a post route for some great yardage.



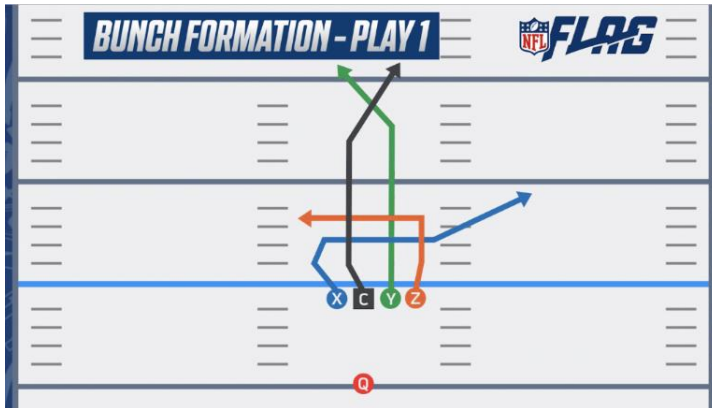
Receiver X does a quick option route toward the left sideline, pulling the defensive player far left. This allows receivers Y and Z to do in and post routes, respectively, for long yardage. If the defense has now all shifted to the left, the center can then release for an out route toward the right sideline for some quick yardage.



Using routes with crossing players is always a good strategy. For this play, receiver Y does a five-yard out play, crossing the far right receiver who does a hitch play. Receiver X and the center also cross as they both do slants.

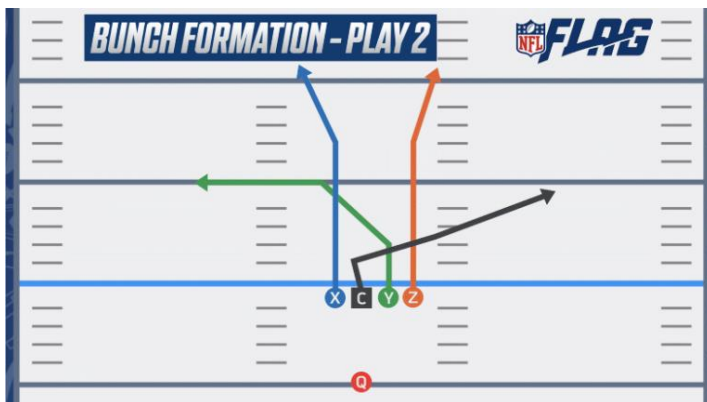
# VI BUNCH FORMATION play examples

For bunch plays your offensive line starts close together and then spreads out to their respective locations. This is to clump the defense, so they're ill-prepared to move quickly upon hike. Due to the difficulty of this play, we recommend setting an order on who moves first to avoid collisions or hesitation.



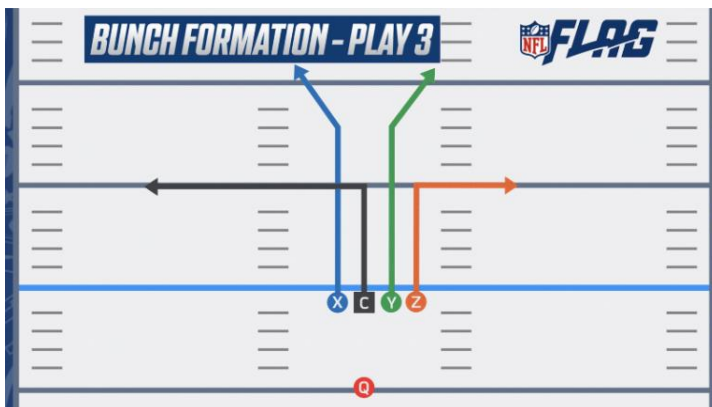
First, the center and receiver Y do respective corner routes, thus drawing the defense scrambling back. From there, the other two receivers do staggered out plays of shorter distance. This way, the receivers are open both for short and long yardage.

**Make sure to practice this NFL FLAG play ahead of time, before adding it to your playbook, since it's a bit more advanced.**



This NFL FLAG play is a less complicated version than the previous one. Receiver X and receiver Z do corner routes, drawing the defensive line back and out.

Once the defensive line is drawn away, receiver Y and the center do crossing routes toward the five-yard line. These spaces should be open for some quick yardage.



The main objective of this football play is to get the defensive line caught up with each other in the center, then spreading out to various points of the field for openings.

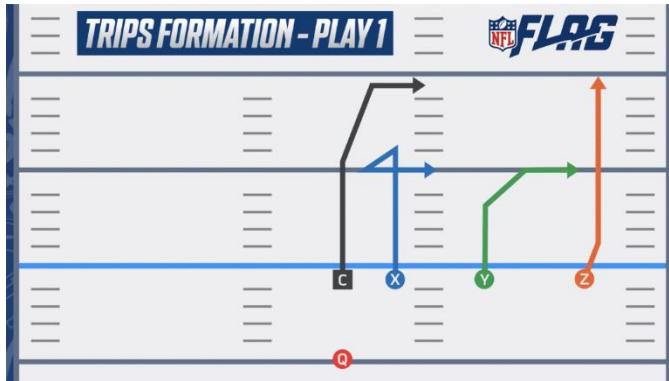
Receivers X and Y both do a seven-yard run, then a corner route. These are the recommended receivers if you need some long yardage. Receiver Z and the center do a five and out route, aiming for the sidelines. These spots should now be open for a quick catch, as the defense pushes

backward to cover the first two players

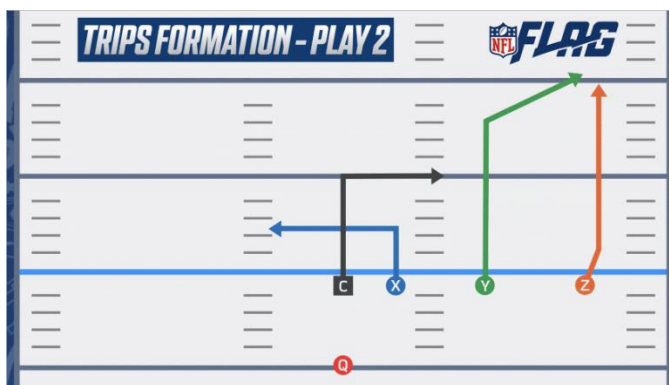


## VII TRIPS FORMATION play examples

During a trips formation, all three receivers are on one side of the quarterback at the start of the play. Note that while we're demonstrating right trips, all the plays can be adapted for the left side.

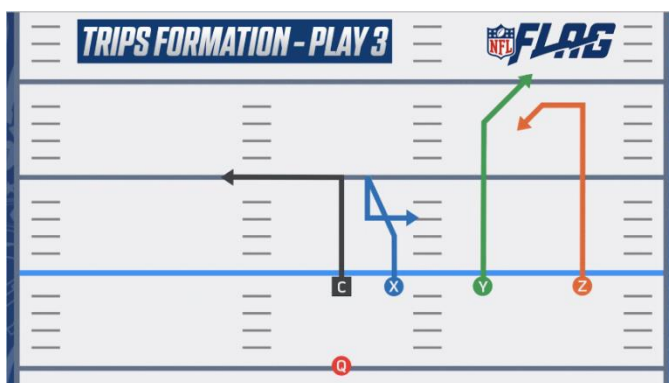


For this play, all receivers line up to the right of the quarterback on the line of scrimmage. At hike, receiver X does an option route at five yards, cutting a little toward the sideline. Receiver Y does an angled out at the five-yard line, and receiver Z does a fly route. Then the center releases and does an angled corner route. This positions the players at staggered yardage, for various lengths of throws.



While this play also staggers the receivers at various lengths, it contains a cross to catch the defense off-guard as the focus on the right side of the field.

At hike, receiver Z does a fly route, and receiver Y does a corner route at seven yards. Meanwhile, receiver X and the center do out and in routes, respectively. This should open up the inside receiver on the left side of the field, since the defense will be pulled to cover the receivers doing heavy yardage to the right.



This NFL FLAG play also takes advantage of the defense being on one side of the field, but in a slightly trickier way.

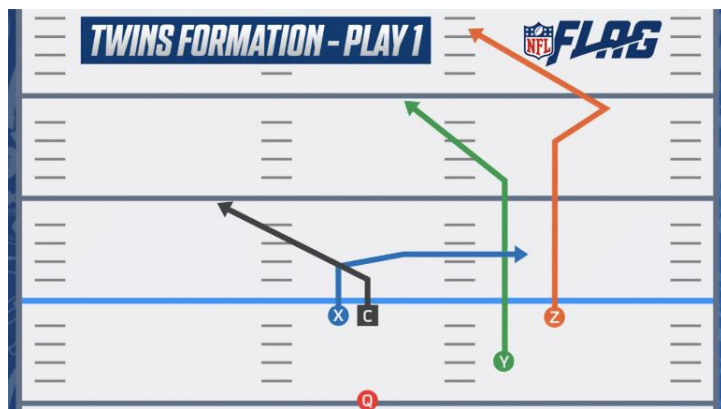
After hiking the ball, receiver Z does a hitch route around the nine-yard line, where receiver Y does a long corner. This opens up two receivers at long yardage if you need a first down. The receiver X does a quick option route at around the five-yard line. This tricks the defense into thinking the player is going left, while they're actually going right. The

defense should eventually follow the player to the right, leaving the center wide open for an out route at the five-yard line.

**Tip: Have the center wait a couple seconds before running their route. This will allow the receivers to draw the defense to one side, leaving the other side wide open.**

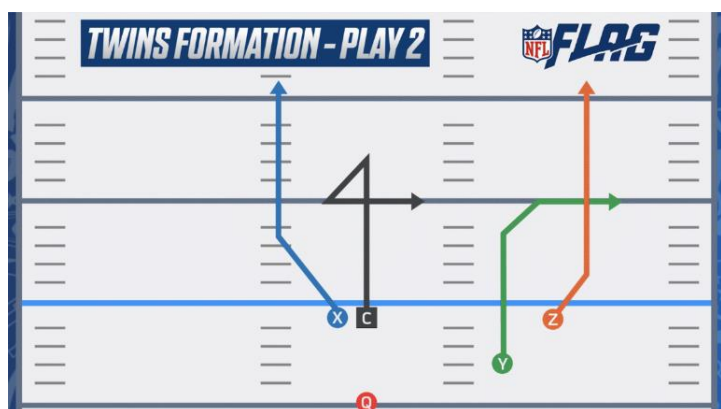
## VIII TWINS FORMATION play examples

For the twins formation of NFL FLAG plays, think of the non-quarterbacks as two pairs, or twins. These two sets of twins stand close to each other at the beginning of the formation and complement each other.

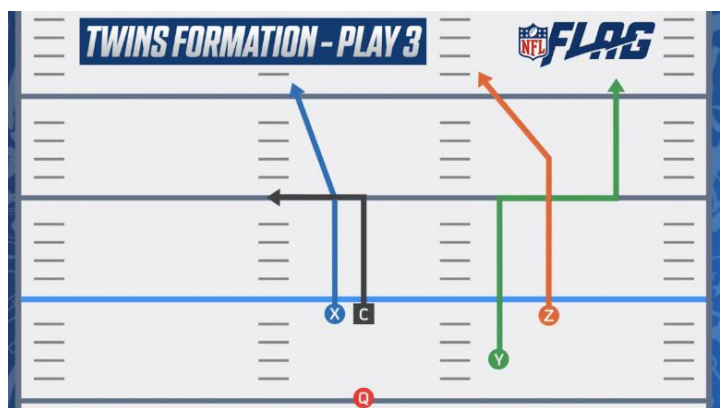


At hike, the two receivers on the right run angles post routes, at staggered lengths, which should draw the defensive line toward the center.

At this point, receiver X and the center do quick in and out routes, respectively. These routes should both be a low yardage, so prepare for a quick pass. This route is perfect for closing a small gap for a first down.



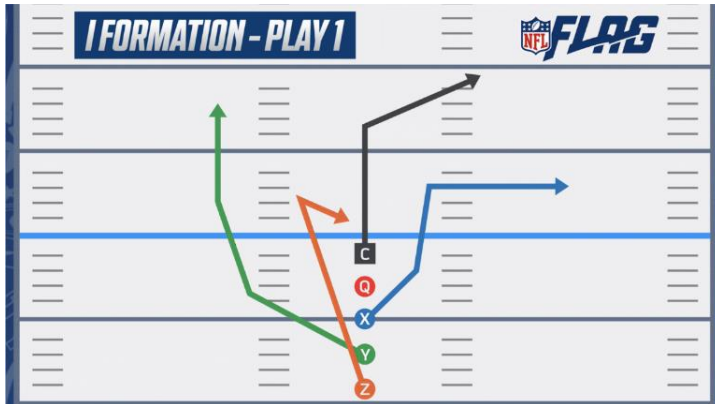
At hike, receiver Z runs a fly, where receiver Y runs a five and out. Meanwhile, receiver X does a slant into a fly. These three routes should draw the defense from the middle, allowing for a quick throw to the center during an option route.



For this NFL FLAG play, after the quarterback calls hike, receiver Z does a post route and receiver Y does a chair route. Meanwhile, receiver X runs a corner and the safety releases into a five and out. The chair route is especially effective, as there are two changes in direction, opposed to the usual one.

# IX “I” FORMATION play examples

In the “I” formation, all three of the receivers are stacked behind the quarterback. This can be a good formation as it doesn’t give any indication to the defense on where the offensive players plan to go. These offensive plays are sure to leave the defense scrambling, making them a great addition to your NFL FLAG playbook.



At hike, receiver X does an angled out route, after they hit the line of scrimmage. Receiver Y does an angled fly, and receiver Z does a quick hitch route after crossing the line. Additionally, the center releases and does a corner route. This NFL FLAG play should draw the defense in all directions, leaving the middle particularly vulnerable.



After the snap, receiver X does an angled out route, as does receiver Y. Receiver Z does an angled hitch route at around the five-yard line. The center should release and do a corner route.

**Tip: When using this NFL FLAG play, have receiver Z stall their route a few seconds. This allows the other receivers and center to draw the defense away from the middle, leaving the hitch route least protected.**



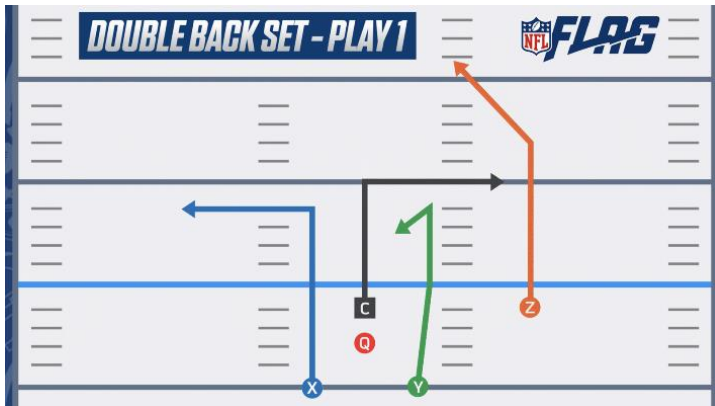
For this NFL FLAG play, receiver X does a chair route at shallow yardage. Receiver Y then crosses receiver X at a five and out. Receiver Z runs two slants and the center releases and runs a fly, opening up the play for some heavy yardage.

**SAFETY TIP: Since receiver X and Y cross paths twice in this play, make sure they discuss who runs first, so they don’t bump into each other. Additional, before you add this one to your**

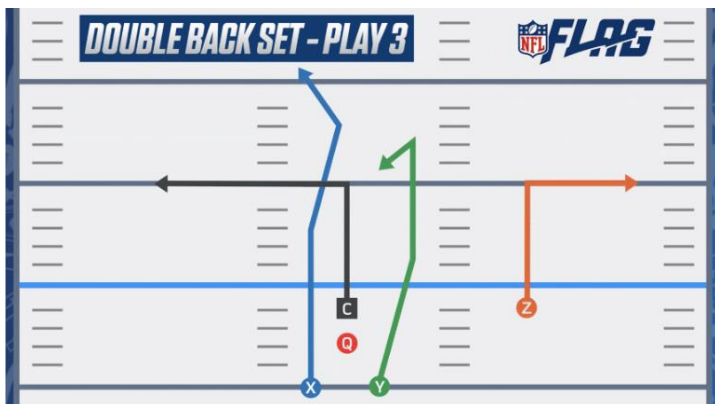
**playbook, we recommend you practice the route ahead of time to decrease likelihood of injury.**

# X DOUBLE BACK SET FORMATION

In the double back set formation, two receivers stand on either side of the quarterback, a couple of yards back. The last receiver stands farther from the quarterback at the line of scrimmage. The following plays demonstrate the final receiver starting on the right side, but they can be adapted for the left as well.



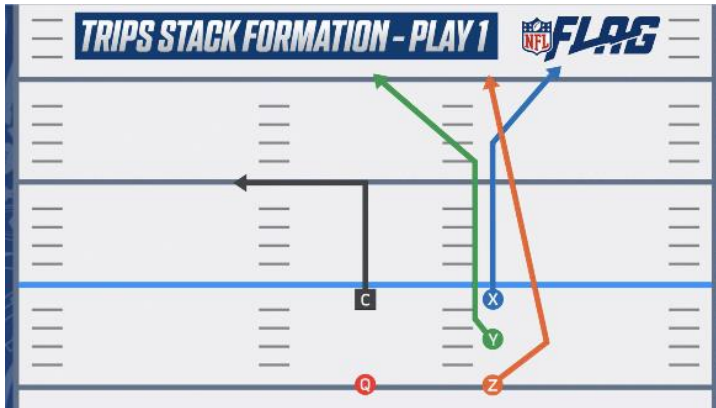
Upon hike, receiver X does an out route at four yards, pushing toward the sideline. Receiver Z does a post route, and the center does a five and out. These routes should leave an opening in the center, perfect for receiver Y to do a shallow hitch route.



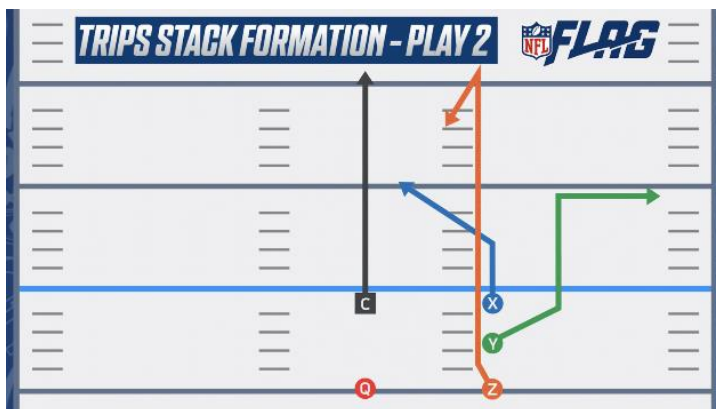
To start the NFL FLAG play, receiver X does an angled corner route, and receiver Z does a wide five out. Receiver Y does an angled hitch route, and the center can release for a five and out. This pushes all the players into different spots on the field, creating a variety of throwing options. It's a great offensive scheme to add to your NFL FLAG playbook.

# XI TRIPS STACK FORMATION plays

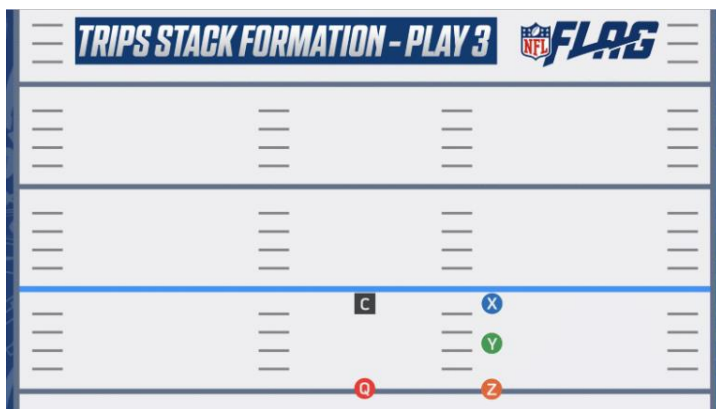
For this formation, three receivers stand on one side of the quarterback stacked vertically. The trips are demonstrated here being on the far right side, but the stack can be located anywhere you prefer along the line of scrimmage.



At hike, receiver X runs eight yards, then does a corner route. Receiver Y does an angled post route, and receiver Z does an angled fly. All three of these routes drives the defense deep in the field, allowing the center to do a quick five and out for short yardage.



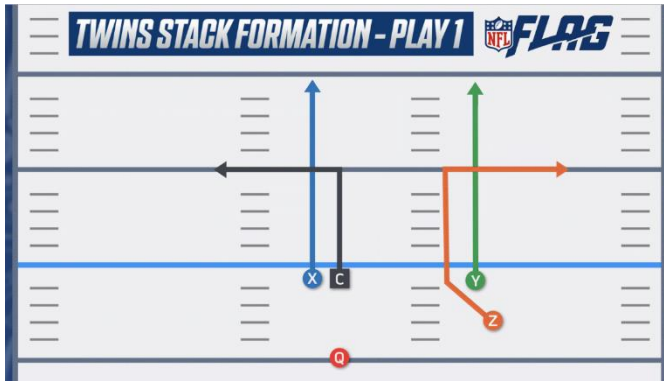
At hike, receiver X does a short post route, and receiver Y does a shallow out route aimed for the sideline. Receiver Z then does a hitch route at the 10-yard line, creating a deeper pass option. If none of the receivers are open, the center can release into a fly route for some heavy yardage.



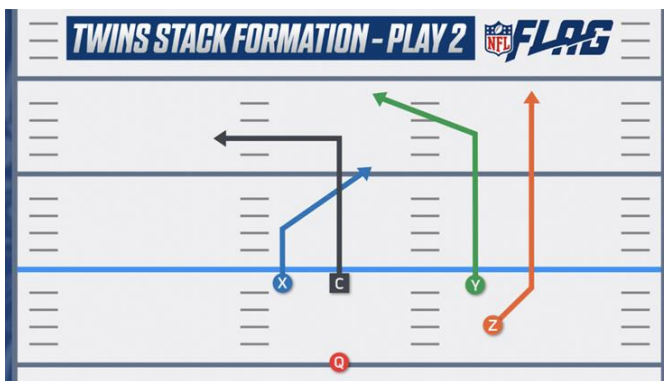
This NFL FLAG play focuses on the right side of the field, with two cuts towards the center, and is a perfect strategy to use against a team with a weaker right defensive side. Upon hike, receiver X does a seven yard run, then cuts in. Then receiver Y does an angled corner route, with receiver Z doing an angled in route. The center does a deep corner route, further playing into the right side's weakness.

## XII TWINS STACK FORMATION plays

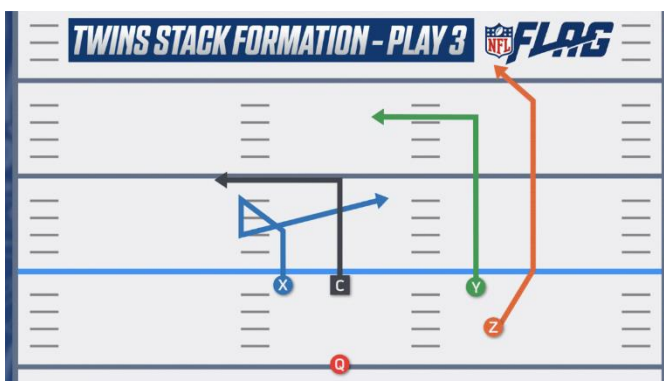
The twins stack formation is very similar to the trips stack. Two receivers stack on either side of the quarterback. In the examples that follow, they are stacked on the right side, with the final receiver on the opposite side of the quarterback.



After hike, receiver Y does a fly route, and receiver Z does a five and out. Meanwhile, receiver X does a fly and the center runs a five and out. This NFL FLAG play provides two options for short yardage, and two options for long yardage so you're covered regardless of the length of yards you need.



After the quarterback calls hike, receiver Y does a seven yard corner play, and receiver Z does a fly route. Meanwhile, receiver X does a shallow post route, crossing the center who does a seven yard out route. This NFL FLAG play staggers out the yardage for each player, for various length options – another great beginner play for the football playbook.



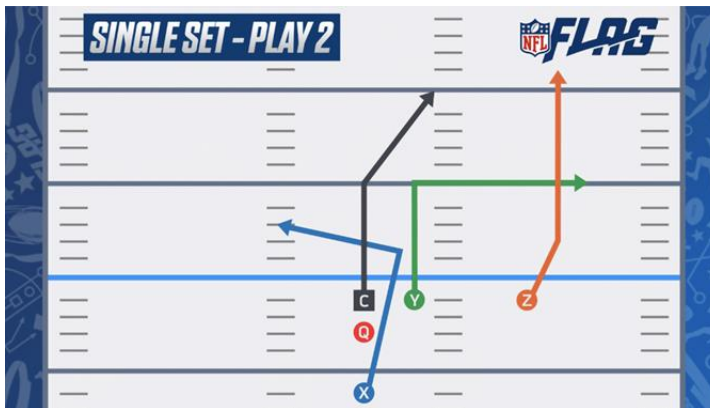
For this NFL FLAG play, receiver Y runs an eight yard in route, while receiver Z does a deep post route. Both of these routes are deep for heavy yardage. Meanwhile, receiver X does a shallow option route across the center, while the center releases for a five and out. These two players will be open for more shallow yardage.

## XIII SINGLE SET FORMATION plays

In an NFL FLAG single set formation, two receivers line up on the line of scrimmage, equal distances away from each other. The final receiver a few yards behind the quarterback. Keep in mind that distance between players can be adjusted for personal customization.



Need some deep yardage to snag that first down? This might be the perfect beginner NFL FLAG play for you. Receiver Y does a deep corner route, while receiver Z does an angled fly route after juking their defenseman. This should pull the defense deep and to the right. Meanwhile, receiver X does an angles fly route to the left. If short yardage is more in the cards, the center can release for a five and out.



This NFL FLAG play has all four players at various lengths of yardage on the field, allowing for versatility from the quarterback. Receiver Z runs the farthest with a fly route. Receiver Y does a five and out, while receiver X starts with a slant, before crossing across the middle in an out route. Lastly, the center can run a mid-length corner route.

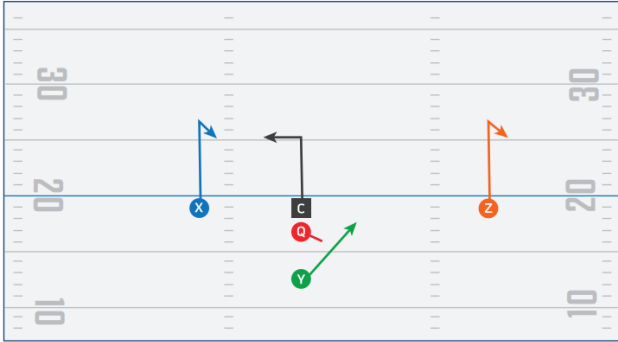


Upon hike, receiver Z runs a post route, meanwhile receiver Y runs a corner route, both a deep yardage. Receiver X runs an angled fly route, opening up the shallow left side, where the center runs a five and out.

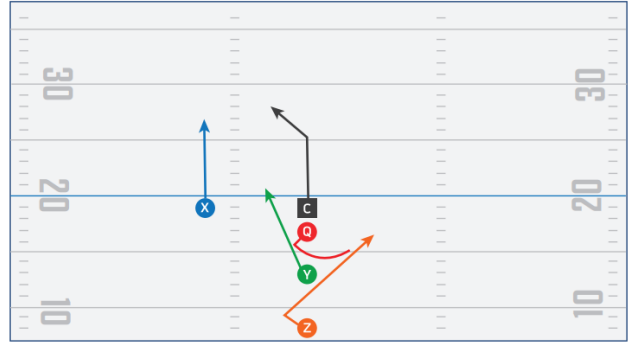
**SAFETY TIP: Whenever players are set to cross in their routes in NFL FLAG plays, practice the plays ahead of time. It eliminates any hesitation players may have on the field, decreasing the risk of injury.**

# XIV RUN play examples

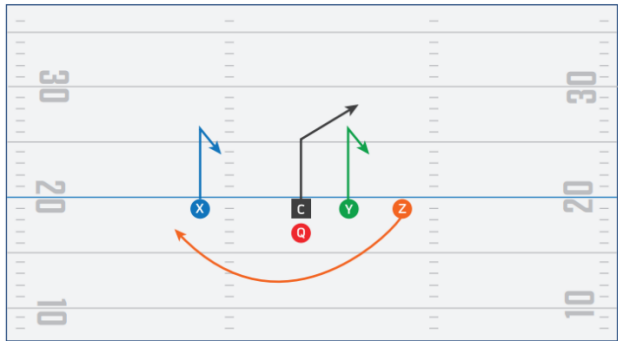
**HB DIVE**



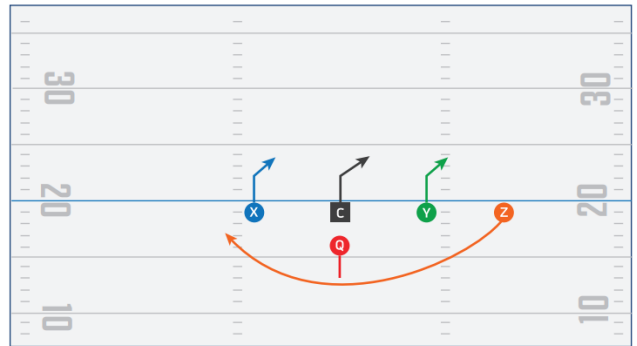
**CROSSBUCK**



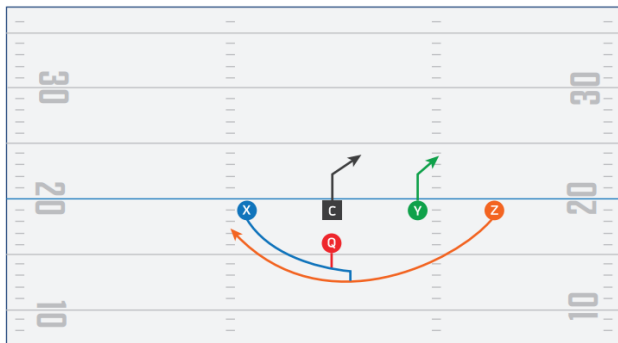
**END AROUND**



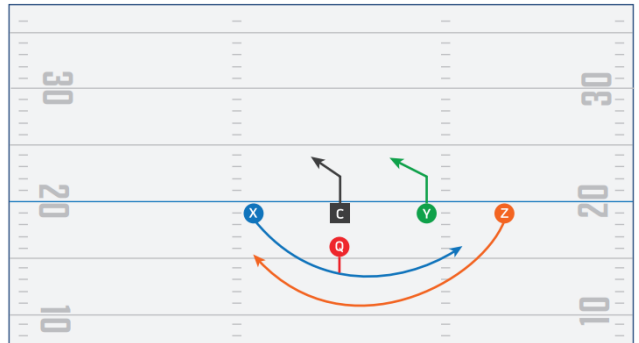
**REVERSE**



**DOUBLE REVERSE**



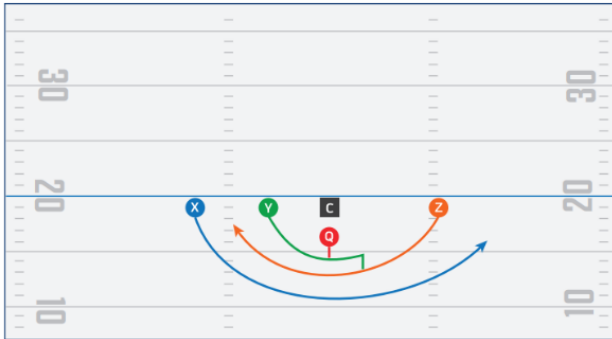
**FAKE DOUBLE REVERSE**



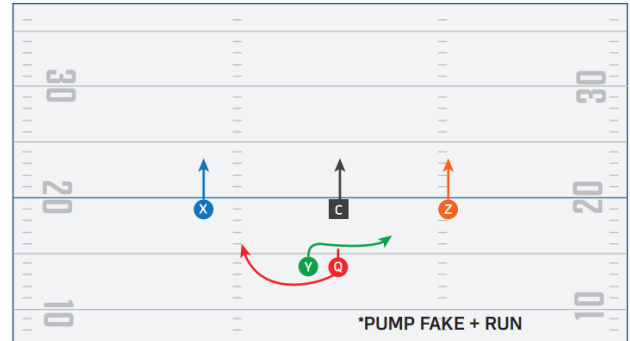


# XIV RUN play examples, continued

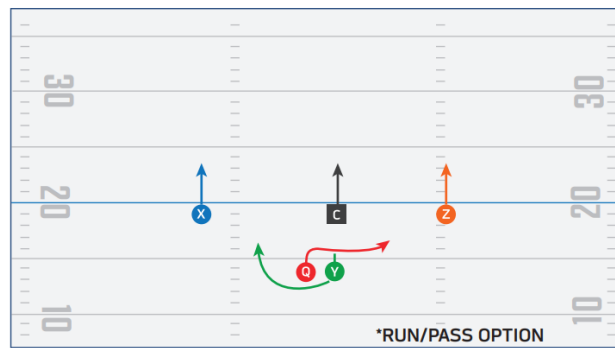
## FAKE TRIPLE REVERSE



## HB OPTION

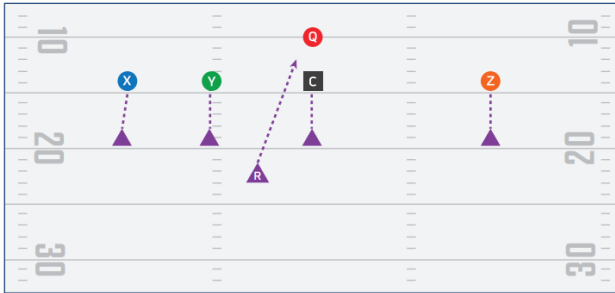


## QB OPTION

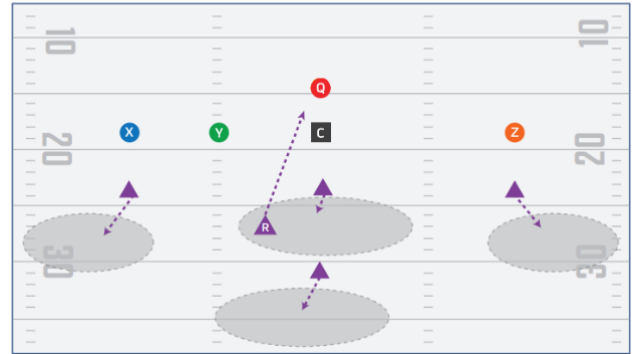


# XV DEFENSIVE COVERAGES

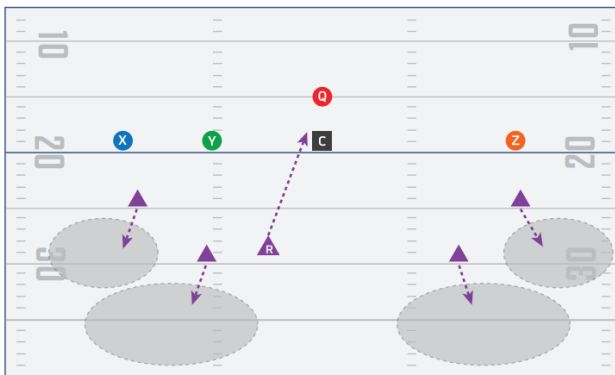
## NFL FLAG MAN



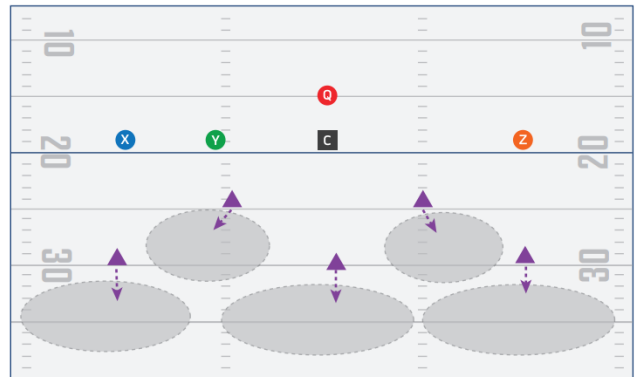
## NFL FLAG COVER 1



## NFL FLAG COVER 2



## NFL FLAG COVER 3



## NFL FLAG COVER 4

