



**Youth NFL FLAG Football**  
***SKILLS & DRILLS for SUCCESS***

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# SKILLS & DRILLS

## I Overview

All of Lincoln Parks and Recreation youth sports are designed to be instructional and developmental.

We want youth sports to be as fun as possible for all involved. To assist that in happening the following ideas, with the assistance of the National Football League, are provided so children can learn the correct way to play the sport of flag football.

The following are some drills for practice that can help teach the fundamentals of the game so ALL can be as successful as possible and reach their full potential.

Have a wonderful season.



## II Running Back Drills

When it comes to being a successful running back, you can't skip over the basics. It's always important to learn the fundamentals, especially when skill level can vary greatly. **Find drill video at:**

**<https://nflflag.com/football-drills/running-back-drills>**



### Receiving the Football

Proper hand placement is key in a football handoff. Here's what yours should look like: Your arms should be close to your body, with your dominant arm across your stomach and the other across your chest. You want to cup your hands to create an oval shape so that when you receive the football, you can secure it tightly against your torso.

When you have the ball, keep it tight and secure it close to your body, decreasing the odds of defensive interference or incomplete handoffs. Practice this simple ball-holding setup before running through the various drills. While it may feel simple, it never hurts to revisit fundamentals.

### 2-Step Handoff

**Setup:** At hike, the running back should be just a few short paces behind the quarterback, either at an angle or directly behind them. As long as they are able to reach the quarterback quickly, this setup can be customized to your play's needs.

**Directions:** After hike, the quarterback two steps to a pre-designated side, where they meet the moving running back. When their paths cross, the quarterback firmly puts the football in the running back's cradled arms. The running back then completes their forward route.

**Tips:** Make sure the running back is also moving when meeting the quarterback for the handoff so they have momentum to complete their route as quickly as possible. This movement can be done at an angle or straight forward.

### 3-Step Handoff

**Setup:** For this running back drill, the running back should be close to the quarterback, either at an angle or straight behind. Make sure all players are behind the line of scrimmage.

**Directions:** The 3-step handoff is similar to the 2-step handoff, but the difference is the quarterback runs three steps. Like the 2-step handoff, the two players meet close together, with the quarterback strongly putting the football in the running back's pre-setup arms.

**Tips:** This handoff can also be completed as a "stretch," where the quarterback positions themselves within arms' length and extends, or stretches, the ball in the running back's arms. Stretch handoffs can be especially effective during fake outs.

## 1-Step Fake Handoff

**Setup:** For this running back drill, the quarterback will be moving one step before ball handoff, so the running back should only be a few quick paces away from them, on a slant or directly behind. You can customize this setup – just make sure all players are behind the line of scrimmage at hike.

**Directions:** It's time to break out your acting skills because fake handoffs are only effective if you sell them to the defense. Once the quarterback and running back meet, both players should over exaggerate the handoff, faking as if the running back now has the ball for a forward running play. After this quick "handoff," the quarterback quickly pulls back the ball and rolls in the opposite direction of the running back. They then release the ball swiftly before the defense repositions themselves from the fake handoff.

**Tips:** The key to this kind of handoff is salesmanship. When the ball is "handed off," the running back should slightly lean forward, making it difficult for the defense to decipher whether they have the ball. The quarterback should also work on quickly pulling the ball back from the faked handoff, so the defense has a harder time following the play.

## Stretch Fake Handoff

**Setup:** Like the previous running back drills, the running back should start a few yards away from the quarterback so they can quickly get to the quarterback and perform the fake, which will be done behind the line of scrimmage.

**Directions:** Upon hike, the quarterback and running back move toward the pre-designated location. Once close to each other, the quarterback extends, or stretches, their arm to mimic firmly tucking the football into the running back's arms. The running back continues their route as if they just received the ball, aiming to convince the defense to follow them. Once this handoff fake is completed, the quarterback quickly wheels around in the opposite direction of the running back while the defense is distracted. But remember, these fakes are only successful in getting the quarterback more time to execute plays if they are tight and fully acted out.

**Tips:** When performing a fake, communication is key. The quarterback should let the running back and the other receivers know ahead of time that they are performing a fake, so there is no confusion of the play.

## Running Back Drills that Boost Speed and Footwork

While it is beneficial for all players to be quick on their feet, it's especially important that running backs are agile and fast. Because running backs need to be able to dodge, duck, dip, and sprint to the end zone, the following are some running back drills to help boost agility and speed.

## Hop and Switch Drill

**Setup:** The intention of the hop and switch drill is to feel more comfortable and confident with tucking the football in your arm, and potentially switching carrying sides, during a game. To get set up for this running back drill, bend over with your feet shoulder width apart, similar to if you were a center about to hike a football. The football should be tucked against the side of your chest in one arm. The opposite arm should be fully extended, flat on the ground in front of you. Once you are in a balanced position, extend the leg of the arm that is carrying the football.

**Directions:** Hop a couple yards forward, switching the arm that is carrying the football, then landing on the hand that was originally carrying the football. During this motion, you should also alternate the foot that is planted on the ground and the leg that is extended. Remember, the leg that is extended should always be the opposite of the arm carrying the football. Perform a few more hops in this ball-alternating pattern, back-and-forth, to complete the drill.

**Tips:** This running back drill is a bit more complicated, so first practice alternating the hand carrying the ball while standing in place. Then kick it up a notch and add the alternating foot. Once you've gotten the hang of transferring the ball while switching your feet, try incorporating the forward hop motion. When you nail all of these pieces together, you'll be able to complete the hop and switch drill no sweat.

## Fast Footwork Drill

**Setup:** To set up this running back drill, have two players stand about 15 yards apart. One of the players will be on offense carrying the ball, while the other player will be on defense. Don't have a second player with you at the moment? Use a cone, or other type of marker, to indicate where they would be standing. This still gives you an indication of where to perform the drill.

**Directions:** To start this drill, run toward the defensive player and perform a technique to get around them. These techniques can range from dips, jukes, and spins – whatever footwork and move is needed to get around the defense guard, while still carrying the football. Quick feet drills are essential, so run through this drill several times, trying a wide variety of footwork techniques, until you feel confident in your maneuvering.

**Tips:** Want to add another element to the drill to further practice your footwork? Wear your flags and have the defensive player try to grab them as you're maneuvering. It forces you to be extra quick on your feet as you spin and juke around, making you even more prepared for a game. And, as an added bonus, it helps your defensive teammate practice their flag-grabbing skills. This is both an offensive *and* defensive drill.

# III Important Quarterback Fundamentals

As you start your quarterback training, it's important to first focus on fundamentals. Even the most experienced players can benefit from the basics, as advanced skills and drills require a solid foundation. Quarterbacks work hand-in-hand with the center, who delivers the ball to the quarterback to kick off the play. **Find drill video at: <https://nflflag.com/football-drills/quarterback-drills>**



## 3 Basic Quarterback Drills

### Underneath Snap Drill

For this quarterback drill, the quarterback should be lined up directly behind the center, with knees bend and hands open. Upon hike, the center carries the ball through their legs and firmly places the ball within the quarterback's waiting hands. There should be no tossing between the center and quarterback – just a strong ball placement.

### Shotgun Snap Drill

The shotgun snap is a little more advanced for both the center and the quarterback. For this drill, the quarterback is positioned around five yards directly behind the center, with their knees bent and hands open ready to receive the ball. Upon hike, the center looks between their legs at the quarterback and strongly shoots the ball, like a shotgun, back. This technique can take some time to perfect, so practice ahead of time to determine the strength of snap needed for various distances.

### Properly Releasing the Ball

Your throwing form should slightly alter depending on the type of throw you're performing.

Need to make a quick pass to an open receiver at a short distance? Your form needs more of a follow-through to increase speed and solidify direction.

Throwing a Hail Mary to the end zone? Release the ball a little farther back behind your head, giving it the arch it needs to go a long distance.

Take the time to figure out where the proper release point for each kind of throw. As you complete these drills and gain more experience, these various release points will become second nature.

## Best Quarterback Drills to Improve In-Game Technique

The center snaps the ball and it's in the quarterback's hands – now what? The following are a few techniques and strategies quarterbacks can utilize and adapt during gameplay. It is recommended practicing these quarterback throwing drills ahead of time, so they feel more confident no matter what situation they're thrown into.

### 1-Step Drill

**Setup:** To set up for this quarterback drill, the quarterback lines up directly behind the center, with their knees bent and their hands positioned correctly underneath.

**Directions:** After the center hands off the ball, take one step backward to survey the field and find an open receiver. Once you find a receiver, open up, point your shoulders, take a step, and release the ball.

**Tips:** Try running this quarterback drill quickly, with several balls back-to-back. This will help the quarterback make some game-time decisions quicker and more confidently during a game.

### 3-Step Drop Drill

**Setup:** To run this drill properly, the quarterback is positioned right behind the center, with their knees bent and hands ready for the football.

**Directions:** After receiving the ball upon hike, quickly shuffle backward or at a slight angle, distancing yourself from the line of scrimmage. Determine your intended receiver, correctly open and line up your shoulders, and step into a throw. When running this drill, take a special focus on shuffling at different angles. This movement needs to be quick and second-natured.

**Tips:** Use this quarterback drill to practice different types of fake outs. For example, try locking eyes with one receiver, but then quickly shifting your eye-line and throwing to another receiver. Also, it is recommended using various levels of pump fakes. To do a pump fake, motion that you are throwing the ball to one receiver, but then throw to another. Various techniques like this can help you catch the defense off guard, leading to more open throws.

### 5-Step Drill

**Setup:** To set up for this quarterback training, the quarterback is positioned directly behind the center, with knees bent and hands placed underneath, anticipating the snap.

**Directions:** After calling hike and firmly receiving the ball from the center, briskly shuffle back five paces, either straight backward or at a slight angle. This shuffle provides additional distance between you and the incoming defense, allowing you more time to find an open receiver and complete a throw. Once you locate an open receiver, square your shoulders in the correct direction, step into and release a throw. Make sure that your shuffling is quick during this quarterback footwork drill as it will be essential later.

**Tips:** This distanced shuffling will give you more time to connect with a receiver, but it can also give the defense more time to cover receivers. To combat this, practice doing different kinds of pump fakes. From near full-arm extensions to simply bobbing the ball in the opposite direction, these movements can fake out the defense, making it easier to complete a throw.



### 3-Step Roll Out Drill

**Setup:** For this setup, the quarterback should be located close behind the center, with knees bent and hands wide open underneath ready for the football.

**Directions:** Upon hike, take a three-step shuffle on a rounded angle backward and to a side, creating the roll out. Continue shuffling sideways until you locate an open receiver, then square off your shoulders and throw the ball. Make sure to practice this quarterback drill by rolling out to both sides. When shuffling in the opposite direction of your throwing arm, focus on shifting your hips and squaring your shoulders in the direction of the receiver. This motion may feel unnatural at first, but it makes it easier to complete these more difficult throws quickly.

**Tips:** Continuing to run to the side after rolling out can buy you extra time to find a receiver.

### Shotgun Roll Out Drill

**Setup:** To set up for this quarterback drill, the quarterback should be standing about three to five yards directly behind the center, with both arms prepped to receive the snap.

**Directions:** After the center performs a shotgun snap, shuffle back on a rounded angle to distance yourself from the line of scrimmage and the defense. If you're being pressured by a defensive rusher, you can continue to run or shuffle to the side until you complete the throw.

**Tips:** While shotgun snaps can provide you more time to complete the throw, they are trickier to master. Make sure to link up with your center ahead of time and practice all types of snaps.

## IV Seven Essential Wide Receiver Routes

These basic wide receiver routes are important fundamentals to build plays off of and learn the ropes of the flag football game. **Find drill video at: <https://nflflag.com/football-drills/wide-receiver-drills>**



### SLANT

**Setup:** For this receiver route, you'll start on the line of scrimmage, on either side of the quarterback. Slant routes can be performed in both directions, so make sure to clarify with your quarterback which way to run.

**Directions:** Upon hike, you should run forward just a couple of yards, then quickly cut at a near 45-degree angle in the direction of your slant until the pass is complete.

**Tips:** As you prepare for the 45-degree cut, try to juke out the defensive player guarding you. This will cause them to stumble as you change direction, opening you up to receive a throw.

### COMEBACK

**Setup:** To set up the comeback, also known as the hitch route, determine with your quarterback how deep your comeback is. This route can be used both for short and deep yardage.

**Directions:** Run your comeback route at the agreed upon yardage, then turn back a yard to receive the catch. When changing direction backward, plant your foot and turn in the opposite direction. This makes it easier to quickly adjust your direction.

**Tips:** Once you catch the ball, be ready to pivot again and shoot directly up field.

### 5 YARD OUT

**Setup:** For this wide receiver route, line up on either side of the quarterback, at least five yards from the outside boundaries.

**Directions:** Upon hike, run forward for five yards, then quickly turn on a 90-degree angle toward the outside line. You want to be running parallel to the line of scrimmage.

**Tips:** This receiver route is a perfect opportunity to take advantage of a weaker defensive side.

## POST

**Setup:** Whether you're practicing this drill or running this route during a game, line up on the line of scrimmage on either side of the quarterback. Make sure to have a few yards of distance from the quarterback, so you can cut inward toward the center of the field.

**Directions:** To complete a post, run straight forward for 5 to 10 yards, then cut a 45-degree angle toward the center of the field. You can adjust the angle in which you cut to take advantage of openings on the field.

**Tips:** To remember this receiver route, imagine you are running toward the field goal, or "post," after cutting at 5 to 10 yards.

## CORNER

**Setup:** The corner receiver route is similar to the post route: line up on the line of scrimmage, on either side of the quarterback. Aim to be toward the center between the quarterback and the outside line.

**Directions:** Upon hike, run straight forward 5 to 10 yards, then cut at a 45-degree angle toward the outside of the field.

**Tips:** When cutting on a 45-degree angle, plant the opposite foot of the direction you want to go before pivoting. This will result in clean, tight receiver routes that trip up your defensive counterparts.

## FADE

**Setup:** The fade receiver route can be run on either side of the quarterback – just make sure there are a couple yards between you and the center, so you can step inward at the beginning of the play.

**Directions:** After the ball is hiked, take a quick step inward toward the center, then pushing off your inside foot, run toward the outside corner of the field. This route can be adjusted for distance, depending on where openings appear.

**Tips:** Receiver routes with quick direction changes are most effective when juking out defensive players. To best juke, make sure your knees are bent and you're low to the ground. This creates a better center of gravity to move as needed.

## FLY

**Setup:** The fly receiver route can be performed on either side of the quarterback. Position yourself anywhere on the line of scrimmage and get ready to run! The fly route is often for heavy yardage plays, so you'll want to be ready right from "hike."

**Directions:** To run the fly route, simply run straight forward for the number of yards needed. When you're about to reach your desired yardage, look over your shoulder for the throw. You shouldn't stop running at any point during your route, so be on the lookout for the ball as you fly up-field.

**Tips:** When running this route, strategize with your coach on the desired yardage of the play. This will give you a goal of your fly speed and help you know when to turn your head to complete a pass.

# V Wide Receiver Routes for Advanced Players

Now that you've nailed down the basic wide receiver route tree, it's time to start working on more advanced receiver routes that require additional direction changes or advanced footwork.

## CHAIR

- Setup:** This receiver route can be performed on either side of the quarterback. When setting up, make sure you have enough space between you and the outside line, as you will be cutting toward it during the play.
- Directions:** Upon hike, run straight forward around five yards. Once you reach this marker, cut parallel at a 90-degree angle toward the side of the field. Once you finish this traditional "out" route, cut once again 90 degrees toward the end zone.
- Tips:** To have the full impact of this route, make sure you juke out the defense on both of the directional changes. It also helps to put your hands up as if you're catching the ball at each turn. That way, the defense won't anticipate an additional change of direction.

## WHIP / OPTION

- Setup:** To best set up the whip/option receiver route, make sure you have enough space on both sides of you, as you'll be running in both directions. Speak with your coach to determine your beginning direction and intended end direction.
- Directions:** After hike, run on a slight slant in your original direction. Once you reach your intended yardage, pivot backward, then cut parallel to the line of scrimmage if the opposite direction toward your final destination.
- Tips:** This route is best performed for short yardage. Make your cut quickly into your route to catch your defensive guard off balance. This wide receiver route is perfect for a quick first down.

## JERK

- Setup:** This route can be performed on either side of the quarterback. Because this receiver route is for short yardage, it is recommended they line up directly on the line of scrimmage, so you can meet – and beat – your defensive guard.
- Directions:** Think of this as a double whip. Once the play starts, run on a small slant in your first direction. Upon reaching your yardage mark, pivot backward as if you're going to complete a whip/option route. Instead, quickly cut once more parallel to the line of scrimmage in the original direction of your run.
- Tips:** This route is quite difficult and requires advanced footwork. It is recommended practicing the catching drill ahead of time to get more familiar with when to cut. Bending your knees and staying low to the ground will help you maintain your balance when you quickly cut directions and juke out the defense.

## **STOP-N-GO**

**Setup:** For this receiver route, you'll only be running forward, as opposed to a side, so your placement on the field can be customized to expose weak points of your opponent's defense. For example, the receiver can start close to the center and quarterback, or more toward the outside line.

**Directions:** Upon hike, run straight forward a few yards, then pivot on your outside back foot toward the line of scrimmage, feigning a quick comeback route. After pivoting backward, pivot once again on your outside foot and run straight forward to the predetermined throw destination.

**Tips:** The trick to the Stop-N-Go route is when you're pivoting back to the line of scrimmage, you want it to look like you're running a quick comeback route and catching for low yardage. Once the defensive player thinks you've stopped, you can more easily side-step them to complete the receiver route.

## **SLANT-GO / SLOWGO**

**Setup:** This receiver route will be slanting inward, so make sure that you're not too close to the quarterback on either side. However, your location on the line of scrimmage is customizable to your team's preference.

**Directions:** To begin this route, perform a typical slant route inward for around five yards. Once there, pivot off your outside foot for a quick fade toward the corner of your respective side. This play is intended for deep yardage, so make sure to talk with your coach about your destination.

**Tips:** Both the angles of your slant and fade can be adjusted and customized for your team. There are no wrong answers, as long as you achieve the intended redirection of the receiver route.

## **SQUARE IN**

**Setup:** To properly set up for this drill, line up on the line of scrimmage, on either side of the quarterback. This route will be crossing inward, so make sure there's enough room between the other receivers and yourself to have a full range of motion.

**Directions:** Run straight forward for about 10 yards, shuffling your feet to juke out any defensive guards. Then, push off your outside foot at a 90-degree angle toward the inside of the field. This route is similar to a traditional "5 and in" route but is deeper in the field with an increased emphasis on a tight cut inward.

**Tips:** Team up with your quarterback and coach to determine how deep of a cut inward you should be taking as a receiver. This will help you determine when to anticipate a pass and get your hands positioned correctly.

## DIG

**Setup:** For the set-up of this route, position yourself on the line of scrimmage, halfway between the quarterback and the outside boundary. This route can be performed on either side of the quarterback, just make sure there's enough distance between the other players and yourself, as this route includes direction changes.

**Directions:** At the start of this route, run straight forward about seven yards. Once you reach the seven-yard mark, juke and cut inward at a 45-degree angle, as if running a post. After running a few yards in this new direction, juke once again and pivot 45 degrees until you're parallel with the line of scrimmage. Continue running this way until you receive the catch or the play is completed.

**Tips:** The key to the dig route is making your pivots tight and your jukes as clean as possible. Practice these two direction changes until they're seamless and can easily throw off your defender.

## WHEEL

**Setup:** The wheel route is utilized by the inside, or slot, receiver. Therefore, you want to position yourself on the line of scrimmage, relatively close to the quarterback, with some distance between the other receivers. This will give you more room to perform your motions as other receivers complete their respective routes.

**Directions:** To begin this drill, run a slanted outward at approximately a 45-degree angle. This part of the route will be rounded, or wheel-like, which is a deviation from the typical tight cuts in wide receiver routes. After running this rounded route for a few yards, perform another wheel and start moving upward on the field, similar to a fly route, until you reach your needed yardage.

**Tips:** The rounded direction changes in this route are intended to strategically position yourself wheeling around the outside, or wide receiver. The defense will have a more difficult time following two receivers who are intentionally crossing.

## VI Youth Football Agility Drills

Speed and agility are both essential traits for successful football players – both on offense and defense. Having speed and agility helps players quickly change directions at a moments' notice and adapt to play as they unfold. The following five football speed and agility drills should help you start preparing for the upcoming season. **SUPPLIES NEEDED:** While a bright set of cones is recommended to outline positions and lengths of the football agility drills, they aren't required. Use any visible marker, such as tennis balls, flags, or shoes. **Find drill video at: <https://nflflag.com/football-drills/football-agility-drills>**

### FOOT FIRE DRILL

**Objective:** The foot fire drill is more a simple speed and agility drill for football, aiming to boost players' cardio and endurance, while preparing them for quick footwork in offensive and defensive plays.

**Setup:** For each player completing the drill, place two cones, or markers, on the outsides of the player's feet. These cones should be slightly wider than the player's shoulders, giving them enough room to shuffle their feet, while making sure their movements are centered and controlled.

**Directions:** To start this drill, begin by moving your legs and feet back and forth, in a tight, cutting fashion. Make sure you are also pumping your arms to complete the full motion of the drill. Ankles should not be kicked back as if you were running in place, but rather shuffled back and forth upon the ground. As you build confidence and agility, steadily increases the speed.

**Tips:** This drill is a great start to a practice, as it increases the players' heart rates and gets their blood pumping, while not being overly complex.

### 4-CORNER DRILL

**Objective:** The 4-corner drill is a perfect beginner football and agility drill, strengthening a player's ability to change direction at a moment's notice – an incredibly important skill, especially on defense.

**Setup:** To set up this football cone drill, place four cones in a square, five yards apart. The length between each cone can be adjusted, if needed, but aim to keep each cone equidistant apart.

**Directions:** Upon the start of the drill, backpedal from the first cone to the second cone, pumping your arms and not looking backward. Once you backpedal past the second cone and can see it in front of you, cut at a 90-degree angle and shuffle toward the third cone. Once you pass the third cone, string forward to the fourth cone. After passing the fourth cone, cut 90 degrees again and shuffle back toward the start to complete the square.

**Tips:** While running this football agility drill, remember to bend your knees and stay low to the ground. This will help you make smoother transitions between directions, without tripping over yourself. Additionally, make sure you aren't crossing your feet when shuffling between cones. Doing so makes it very difficult to adjust your direction mid-play as needed.

## ZIG ZAG DRILL

- Objective:** The zig zag drill helps refine a player's ability to quickly change direction when running a route. This agility drill is most common for wide receivers, but can be adapted to other positions.
- Setup:** To set up this drill, create a row of three cones, each 10 yards apart. Next, create another row of three cones, and place them three yards away from the original row, staggering them 5 yards. This will create the needed zig zag shape for the drill.
- Directions:** To start this drill, run quickly from the first cone to the staggered first of the second line. After reaching the cone, quickly cut and run to the next cone of the first line. Do this same pattern for the following three cones, completing the zig zag.
- Tips:** You should run this drill at a controlled, fast pace, rather than an all-out sprint. This will help you stay in control of your footwork while successfully maneuvering around the cones. When cutting, make sure your feet aren't crossing to avoid any tripping. To help with the, plant and pivot off the outside foot of the cone when you cut. This speed and agility drill will help you build footwork skills.

## LATERAL BOX DRILL

- Objective:** The objective of this drill is similar to the foot fire drill, working on footwork.
- Setup:** To set up this drill, place four cones, or markers in an equidistant square. It is recommended to have the cones one yard apart, but they can be adjusted based on players skills.
- Directions:** Start just left of the square, facing toward the side you have designated as the finish. Begin the drill by shuffling left quickly into the center of the square, making sure that both feet quickly step in. Immediately after, shuffle right back to the starting point. Once back at the starting point, spring forward through the front of the square, completing the drill.
- Tips:** It is important to bend your knees and stay low. It will keep your center of gravity stabilized, allowing you to move more quickly and shift directions. Remember to pump your arms to reach maximum acceleration.

## "T" DRILL

- Objective:** This drill is focused on sprinting, rather than shuffling.
- Setup:** To prepare for the "T" drill, place three cones in a line, each five yards apart. Lastly, place a fourth cone lined up with the middle cone, five yards away. This solo cone will serve as the starting position.
- Directions:** Start at the solo cone and sprint to the middle cone in front of you. Then, pivot at a 90-degree angle to the right and sprint to the next cone, and touch it. After touching that cone, sprint to the furthest cone in the line and touch it as well. Complete the drill by sprinting past the middle cone.
- Tips:** Make sure you are creating tight pivots when changing directions, as opposed to rounding out any turns. This will help improve the ability to change direction in the middle of a play.



## VII Football Conditioning Drills

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Cones, or visible markers, such as tennis balls, flags, or shoes, are recommended so you can mark where players should start and end. **Find drill video at:** <https://nfllag.com/football-drills/football-speed-drills>



### HIGH KNEES

**Objective:** This drill is a callisthenic exercise, designed to help players build endurance. It is a good drill to warm up before practice or a game.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

**Directions:** Start jogging while bringing your knees up to your chest (aim for a 90-degree angle or higher). Let your feet only touch the ground for a moment before quickly switching back to the other leg. Look straight ahead, keep your chest up, and pump your arms as you rapidly and smoothly make your movements downfield.

**Tips:** Don't do this drill if you're already fatigued. Conditioning drills are meant to prepare your body, increase flexibility, and improve endurance. If you're extremely exhausted before you even begin, your muscles will be too strained to properly build strength.

### LUNGES

**Objective:** Lunges target the lower body. When they're done in repetition, they increase flexibility, shape and strengthen legs muscles, while engaging the core.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

**Directions:** Start with your right leg in front and the left leg behind, making sure there's enough space between them for stability. Putting all of the weight in your front foot, lunge straight down, dropping your back knee so that it almost touches the ground. Your front leg should bend to a 90-degree angle. Then, slowly straighten your front leg so that you return to a stance. Take an oversized step with the opposite foot and complete a lunge on that side. With every step, keep your opposite arm forward as you complete the lunge. Switch off legs until you've reached the finishing point.

**Tips:** To avoid injury, make sure your back knee doesn't make contact with the ground when lunging. Additionally, both of your knees should be aligned and never collapse inward – wobbly knees are a fast way to get hurt. It's okay to start this drill slow and perfect the form. As you develop, you can take conditioning drills at a faster pace.

## REAR KICKS

**Objective:** Rear kicks are a popular drill in every sport. It's a perfect way to warm up the lower body before practice or a game.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

**Directions:** Keep your upper body straight and eyes up as you begin your run. But instead of taking a traditional running form, drive your heel to your glutes at each step. You want to quickly bring your heel all the way back to your rear, stretching out your quad. Pump your arms with each step, helping you get more and more momentum.

**Tips:** Keep in mind this is a conditioning drill and not a race. It's less about getting from point A to point B as quickly as possible and more about completing the full movement of reaching the back heel.

## QUICK STEPS

**Objective:** This is a great football speed workout that builds quick feet.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player should finish the drill.

**Directions:** To begin this drill, you first need to take the proper stance. Slightly bend your knees, place your weight on the ball of your feet. Keep your eyes up and your arms in front of you. Then, as quickly as you can, take small, choppy steps – almost like running in place – while simultaneously pumping your arms at the same high speed. Run all the way through the cone.

**Tips:** This drill is an easy way to help you increase agility. If you want to add a challenge, implement throwing and catching a football with a teammate to this drill. It forces you to react to a play, while still focusing on quick feet.

## HIGH KNEES + SCOOP

**Objective:** High knees with a scoop is meant to help players fully stretch out their lower muscles before a practice or a game.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player should finish the drill.

**Directions:** You're going to take this drill at a walking pace. Start by taking a step with your left foot as you grab your knee or shin of your right leg with both hands, and pull your right leg to your chest. The higher and tighter the pull, the better the stretch. Then, while balancing, plant your right heel on the ground with your toe pointing upward toward the sky. Reach down and scoop the grass on either side of your foot, while keeping your leg extended, for a full calf and hamstring stretch. Switch sides until you've reached the finishing point.

**Tips:** This drill requires a lot of balance to accomplish. To make it easier, when you're pulling your leg to your chest, place one hand on your knee and the other to your shin. This will help you secure a stretch without toppling over.

## SUMO SQUATS

**Objective:** Sumo squats are all about the glutes and the inner thigh muscles. Feet positioning is what makes this squat different from a traditional one and an excellent conditioning drill. The combination of a wide stance and toes pointed at 45-degrees really works those inner leg muscles. Often those muscles are left ignored, but the sumo squat is an instant reminder.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player should finish the drill.

**Directions:** To begin this drill, face forward toward the opposite cone. In one smooth motion take an oversized step, swinging your back leg forward while rotating your hips 90 degrees. When you have completely turned sideways, plant your leg on the ground about 6 inches wider than your shoulders, with your toes pointing at a 45-degree angle. Then bend into a lunge on your planted foot, putting all the weight into that foot and extending your back leg straight. Aim to lower your hips until they're parallel with the ground. Slowly press back up through your heels, keeping your core tight, and then shift your weight to the other leg and complete the lunge on the other side. As you make your way to a stance, swing your back leg up as you rotate your body 180 degrees so that you're facing the opposite side. Complete a lunge on both legs as before, and continue this drill until you've reached the finishing point.

**Tips:** To make this a fun conditioning drill countdown out loud the number of squats you have to do to reach the finish line.

## KARAOKE

**Objective:** This is designed to loosen up the hips and improve agility and speed. It's also an excellent way to practice those quick feet skills.

**Setup:** Place a cone to mark where the player should start and another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player should finish the drill.

**Directions:** To begin this drill, turn your body so that you're facing sideways. In this scenario, let's say you're standing with your left foot closest to the finish line. With your arms out and to the sides, take your back foot – the right one in this case – and cross it over and in front of your left foot. When you're making this crossing motion, make sure that you're turning your pelvis as you bring your right foot in front of your left. Then, take a step and reach all the way behind you as you open your hips and cross your right foot behind your left leg. As you nail this sideways form, pick up speed. Keep your core tight and remember: whenever you're crossing in front and behind, fully rotate your hips in both directions. Repeat this drill evenly on both sides.

**Tips:** This drill is extremely versatile. You can take it at a slow pace for beginners, or add a kick for advanced players. You can also start slow and gradually pick up the pace.

# VIII How to Pull a Flag

The biggest mistakes players make are grabbing the flag at the wrong spot, not aligning their body correctly, and overrunning the ball-carrier. The following techniques will improve your chances of removing the ball-carrier's flags.

**Find drill video at: <https://nflflag.com/football-drills/flag-pulling-drills>**



## CORRECT STANCE

The initial position you want to take when pulling an opponent's flag is similar to the stance you would take in tackle football – the difference is you're pulling their flags instead of physically tackling the player. First, align yourself in front of the ball-carrier, which will give you more time to pull their flags and make it difficult for them to get around you. Then, square up your shoulders and slightly bend your knees, keeping your eyes on the flags (not the player).

## BREAK DOWN

As you reach your opponent, think about breaking down defensively by shuffling your feet as you slow your speed. Remember to align your body and position yourself in front of the ball-carrier as you break down.

## TWO HANDS, TWO FLAGS

Always use both hands to go for both flags. If you try to just pull one flag with one hand, or one flag with two hands, your odds of successfully "tackling" the ball-carrier decrease tremendously.

## AIM FOR THE BASE OF THE FLAG

You should always try to pull the flag as close to the base of the belt as possible. Grip it firmly and yank straight down in a swiping motion.

## FLAG-PULLING DRILLS

### ZIG ZAG DRILL

**Setup:** This flag pulling drill is great for all ages as it breaks down the exact steps needed to remove the ball-carrier's flags. To start, have a set of defensive players line up in two staggered vertical lines about five yards apart. They will remain stationary, facing forward with their hands on their hips. An offensive player should face the defenders, with enough room to get a running start.

**Directions:** To start this drill, the offensive player runs to the first defensive player in the line. As they reach their target, they need to break down, square up, and quickly remove both flags using both hands. Then they sprint to the next staggered player in the opposite vertical line and practice the same motions. This drill is complete after they've reached every player and removed their flags.

**Tips:** The zig zag drill is a great way to practice breaking down as you meet the ball-carrier. To do this effectively, keep your knees bent and stay low so you can easily slow your speed and shuffle back and forth as needed.

## **TUNNEL DRILL**

**Setup:** Not only is this flag pulling drill fun and effective but it requires zero equipment. To start, create a tunnel by having three defensive players stand in one vertical line and three other defensive players stand in another vertical line about 5 feet across from each other. All of the defensive players should be facing forward in the same direction. They will remain stationary during this drill. An offensive player should face the tunnel, starting far enough back to get a running start.

**Directions:** The offensive player's goal is to run through the tunnel of defensive players as fast as he or she can without having their flags removed. The defensive players must remain stationary any may only use their inside hand to remove the flag. They can't use both hands or turn their body to use their outside hand.

**Tips:** The key to this drill is to keep your eyes on the flags, instead of the player, when attempting to remove them. It's also harder to properly grip the flag when you're stationary and the ball-carrier is moving. That's why you want to practice grabbing the flag firmly at the base and swiping straight down to successfully stop your opponent.

## **CONE DRILL**

**Setup:** This defense drill creates a competitive 1 on 1 environment. To set up, place 4 cones 10 yards apart to create a square. If you don't have cones, you can use any visible markers, such as tennis balls or even shoes. You need at least one offensive player and one defensive player to complete this drill.

**Directions:** The offensive player will act as the ball-carrier, standing at the cone in the lower left corner of the square. The defender stands on the opposite side diagonally from them at the upper right cone. At start, both players will spring around the cone in front of them – the offensive player will round the upper left cone, moving upward. The defensive player will round the lower right cone, moving downward. Then, both players will meet in the middle for a 1 on 1 showdown. The defender wants to pull the ball-carrier's flag(s) before they can escape the square. The offensive player should practice a variety of moves, such as spinning, to beat the defender.

**Tips:** This drill is easy to adjust for all levels. For younger players, you can make the square smaller so that it's less intensive. You can also add an extra defender to challenge the offensive player even more.

**The best part about flag pulling drills is they are a lot of fun. They are engaging, quick, and competitive.**

# IX Catching a Football

Not every pass is the same – some are thrown directly to you, some to the other side. Sometimes you're facing the quarterback to catch the ball, and other times you're running full speed downfield. In every scenario, there are basic fundamentals you can use to successfully make the catch. Here are three steps you can take to learn how to catch a football.

**Find drill video at:**  
<https://nflflag.com/football-drills/how-to-catch-a-football>



## ALIGN YOUR BODY

The easiest way to catch the ball is to square your shoulders and frame your body so that you're facing the quarterback. Of course, that isn't always possible during a game. Whether you're catching a low ball to the side of a Hail Mary over your head, you always want to focus on the ball's trajectory and align your body so that you're directly in the path of the ball.

## HAND POSITIONING

Your hand positioning will change depending where the ball is thrown. For example, if a pass is above your waist, you should extend your arms and create a diamond shape with your pointer fingers together. You always want to use this hand positioning for high balls, even if the ball is thrown to your side. For low passes, cup your hands in front of you with your pinky fingers together. Again, maintain this form for low passes whether it's thrown directly to you or to the side. Remember to catch the ball with your fingers, not your palms. Keep your elbows slightly bent and use big, soft hands to grip the ball.

## TUCK THE BALL

After you catch the ball, you need to make sure you protect it from defenders. You can use your hand, forearm, and elbow to firmly press the ball and tuck it close and tight to your body. As you run your route, keep the ball tucked high and tight to best keep it protected.

## DRILLS THAT TEACH HOW TO PROPERLY CATCH A FOOTBALL

### HIGH AND LOW PASS DRILL

**Setup:** All you need for this catch drill is two players and a ball. They should line up about 10 yards apart from each other to start, and gradually get farther away as the drill continues.

**Directions:** You can't underestimate practicing the fundamentals and this basic catching drill really gets back to basics. Two players practice throwing and receiving the ball with proper hand positioning, while playing catch. First, they should focus on high passes thrown directly to each other and then to the side. The player catching the ball needs to create a diamond shape with their hands and maintain this positioning with every catch. Then, after several throws, they change to low passes, also throwing straight and to the side. For low passes, players need to focus on cupping their hands with their pinkies together. To make this drill more advanced, the players can distance themselves farther apart from each other and throw harder.

**Tips:** If the ball is bouncing off your hands, you're catching it with hard palms. You want to use your fingertips to grip the ball as it's thrown to you. It's also easier to catch the ball when your elbows are slightly bent.

### OVER THE SHOULDER DRILL

**Setup:** Many routes, like post and corner routes, force receivers to catch the ball over their shoulder while running. This drill helps receivers practice proper hand placement and to keep their eyes on the ball's trajectory. This drill requires only two players and a ball.

**Directions:** Two players stand about 10 yards apart from each other, one as a receiver and the other as the quarterback. The receiver will begin moving forward, looking over their shoulder, as the quarterback throws to a designated position in front of them. The receiver must successfully catch the ball while continuing the move forward and tuck it in afterward. As you get more comfortable catching the ball this way you can increase your speed and distance with the quarterback. After several throws, the receiver should switch sides and practice catching the ball over both shoulders. As an added bonus, this is a chance for quarterbacks to improve their accuracy by repeatedly throwing to a designated position.

**Tips:** The key to successfully catching a football over your shoulder is to wait until the last minute to put your hands up. The defender guarding you will also have their back to the ball while running and you don't want to give them any time to block the ball. You also want to be running at full speed and doing that with your hands out can easily slow you down.

# X Step-by-Step Guide to Throwing a Football

Find drill video at: <https://nflflag.com/football-drills/how-to-throw-a-football>



## HAND PLACEMENT

Believe it or not, there's an incorrect way to hold the football. When you pick up or receive the football, spin it so that the laces are on top. Cup your thumb beneath the ball and place your four fingers on top by the laces.

The number of fingers you put on the laces is a personal preference. Quarterbacks vary between two, three, and four fingers on the laces, with the remaining fingers placed behind the laces, closer to your body. Choose how many fingers you want on the laces by the level of comfort and control you want when gripping the football. There is no wrong answer here – just make sure you have the laces on top and are using them to help grip and control the ball.

It is recommended trying various grips ahead of time during practice so you can figure out what works best for you when throwing a football.

## MOTION

Once you find the perfect football grip, lift it above your shoulder. This height allows for a quick release when it's needed. Putting your arm too low limits your range of motion and makes it easier for defensive players to knock down passes.

**Tip: When learning how to throw a football, it is not recommended using a sidearm motion. This is bad for a player's shoulder and a less accurate throwing technique.**

Next, make sure your shoulders are squared and facing your target. Once your shoulders are in the correct position, take a step with the foot opposite of your throwing arm to your intended receiver, building kinetic movement and momentum. Using this foot also acts as a buffer from the defense as you prep your throw.

As you take a step forward, pull the ball behind your head, still keeping the laces on top, and then pull it forward past your head. Continue to follow through until your throwing arm is at around a 90-degree angle before releasing. Remember to follow through all the way – don't stop the motion of your arm when you release the ball.

As you release, flick or pop your wrist downward, almost like you are shooting a basketball. This motion will help you create the desired, and accurate, spiral effect. Your exact release point, though, will change based on how far you're throwing the ball. For example, shorter passes require a release point closer to your ear and a greater follow through to gain enough speed. Long, deep passes, on the other hand, are typically released further back behind your head to create an arch and go the distance needed.

**Tip: Having a hard time remembering to follow through with your throwing arm? Think of it like a golf swing – it wouldn't make sense to stop the golf club at the ball. You want the full swing and the full momentum.**

Learning how to properly throw a football takes time, so don't get discouraged if you flop the first go. The process will require trial and error to test out different hand grips, ball release points, and the amount of power you want to put behind the throw. It takes time to figure out your formula.



## ONE KNEE DRILL

**Objective:** The main objective of the one knee drill is to focus on the fundamental techniques of throw a football. By grounding yourself on one knee, you can better focus on your grip of the football, as well as posture and release.

**Setup:** To execute this drill properly, you need two players. Since this drill is about technique rather than throwing distance or speed, the players can be close to each other, about 10 to 15 yards apart. Each player should then assume the position of the drill, kneeling on one knee.

**Directions:** The two players should throw the football back and forth, while remaining on one knee. During this drill, take extra care on focusing on the fundamentals of how to properly throw a football. You can also test out different grip positions and release angles, so you can find your signature football throw. After 10 or so throws back and forth, you should alternate knees.

**Tips:** Move your torso back and forth while throwing the football, as to mimic the movement you will experience during the game. This will help you better prepare for executing passes while running or dodging defensive players.

## TWO KNEE DRILL

**Objective:** The objective of the two knee drill is the same as the one knee drill – focus on technique and fundamental skills. However, by grounding both knees, this drill requires you to put more force behind the ball, as your range of motion is limited.

**Setup:** To run this drill, have two players kneel on both knees 10 to 15 yards apart from each other.

**Directions:** Like the one knee drill, two players will pass the ball back and forth. But in this drill, you're grounded on both knees. Remember to focus on football grips, releases, and targeting. Additionally, shift your shoulders and body back and forth during the drill, to mimic some of the movement you will experience during traditional gameplay.

**Tips:** While this exercise is focused on building the fundamentals of how to throw a football, it also helps your receiving skills as well.

## HOW TO THROW A FOOTBALL FARTHER

If you're looking to throw a football farther, perfecting your form is the perfect place to start. By constantly using the same form, you'll build the core and arm strength you need to throw a greater distance. Practice moving – both stepping and running – into a pass. When you build momentum, more kinetic energy flows into the ball, resulting in a farther throw. You might be limited in your movements during a game, but you should always try to step into a pass.

## PERFECTING THE SPIRAL

Throwing a perfect spiral is all about the follow-through. When throwing the football, make sure you aren't stopping your arm motion as the ball is released. Instead, continue your arm forward in a full swinging motion. When you release the ball, make sure you flick your wrist downward. Your fingertips should be the last thing in contact with the ball at release.

# XI PLAY OF THE CENTER

The center is one of the most important offensive positions in NFL FLAG football. Not only does the center start off every play by hiking the ball to the quarterback but they can release from the line to become an additional receiver. It is recommended incorporating football center drills into your regular practices and routines. Make sure try all the various stances and snaps to find the right fit for you. **Find drill video at: <https://nflflag.com/football-drills/how-to-snap-a-football>**



## WHAT IS A SNAP IN FOOTBALL?

The snap is an important part of any football game as it signifies the start of an offensive play. The snap involves two players – the quarterback and the center. When the teams are lined up in formation for the beginning of the play, the quarterback calls “hike” to signal the start of the offensive play. While there are many slight variations of a snap, the center ultimately then either hands or tosses the football between their legs to the quarterback who is waiting to receive the football. This motion and exchange of the ball from center to quarterback marks the point when both offensive and defensive players can start their respective routes and plays.

Per NFL FLAG rules, each time the ball is snapped counts as one of the four downs allotted to cross midfield. If the team crosses midfield within the allotted four downs, the offensive team then has three snaps, or downs, to score a touchdown.

The center can release after the snap to open themselves up for a pass. This gives the quarterback an additional receiver.

## ONE HAND SQUARE STANCE

**Setup:** The one hand square stance is likely the stance you envision when you think about how to snap a football. To get in this stance, spread your legs just outside of shoulder-width apart, bending your knees to lower your center of gravity. Make sure that both of your feet are squared off and parallel to the line of scrimmage. During this, you are bent over with one hand on the ball on the line of scrimmage.

**Directions:** Upon hike, carry the football through your legs until you meet the quarterback’s hands, which will complete the handoff.

**Tips:** Make sure that your head is behind the ball.

## **TWO HAND SQUARE STANCE**

**Setup:** The two hand square stance setup is similar to the look of the one hand square stance. Make sure your legs are parallel to the line of scrimmage, spread fairly wide apart. Bend your knees and forward toward the ball, evenly distributing your weight between your legs, ankles, and feet. Grasp the football with both hands, on either side of the ball.

**Directions:** To do this snap, use both hands to carry the football through your legs until it meets the quarterback's waiting hands.

**Tips:** Press the palms of your hands into the ball when you're in your stance. This pressure on the ball will firmly hand the ball off to the quarterback.

## **ONE HANDED STAGGERED STANCE**

**Setup:** For the one handed staggered stance, plant your feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart. However, instead of having both of your feet parallel to the line of scrimmage, have one foot slightly farther back, anywhere from six inches to a foot. This places you in a more angles, staggered stance. Once your feet are in position, bend over the football, and grasp it with the hand pair with the staggered foot.

**Directions:** Once in position, cup the football with one hand, then pull it through your legs until you meet the quarterback's waiting hands.

**Tips:** It doesn't matter which foot you choose to stagger. Do what's comfortable.

## **TWO HAND STAGGERED STANCE**

**Setup:** Plant your feet slightly outside of shoulder-width apart, bending your knees to lower your center of gravity. Make sure one foot is planted six inches to one foot further back than the other, creating the staggered stance. Your torso should be bent over the ball. Grip the football with both hands, one on either side of the ball.

**Directions:** Once the quarterback calls hike, carry the ball with both hands through the middle of your legs until you meet the hands of the quarterback.

**Tips:** Make sure your knees are always bent while snapping the ball. This creates a more firm, grounded position as a center. This stance allows you to change direction easier, making you a more effective receiver upon release.

## **SHOTGUN SNAP**

**Setup:** During a shotgun snap the initial setup can be any of the other four types of snaps. The difference in a shotgun snap is that the quarterback is not directly behind the center. Instead, they'll position themselves anywhere from 5 to 10 yards directly behind the center.

**Directions:** When the quarterback call hike, you will shoot (like a shotgun) the ball between your legs – either with one or both hands – to the quarterback behind you. Make sure your hands follow through when shooting the ball backward, as it will help you achieve top speed and strength of your snap.

**Tips:** Remember to look backward between your legs to visualize your target.