

Kids Flag Football Practice Format

1. Warm-Up and Stretching (10-15 minutes)

Objective: Prepare players' bodies for physical activity, reduce the risk of injury, and improve flexibility.

Activities:

- **Dynamic Warm-Up:** Start with light jogging, high knees, butt kicks, and side shuffles.
- **Stretching:** Include arm circles, leg swings, hip rotations, and toe touches. Focus on dynamic stretches that mimic movements in flag football.
- **Fun Warm-Up Game:** Incorporate a quick, fun game like "Flag Tag" where players have to pull each other's flags in a defined area. This adds excitement and helps build agility and flag-pulling skills.

2. Individual Skill Development (15-20 minutes)

Objective: Focus on basic skills like throwing, catching, running, and flag-pulling.

Activities:

- **Passing and Catching Drills:** Pair up players to practice throwing and catching. Start with short passes and gradually increase the distance. Focus on proper throwing mechanics and catching techniques (e.g., catching with hands away from the body).
- **Running and Agility Drills:** Set up cones for zig-zag or ladder drills to improve agility, footwork, and change of direction. Players can practice carrying a football while running through the cones to simulate in-game situations.
- **Flag-Pulling Drills:** Organize 1v1 or 2v2 drills where players practice pulling flags from a ball carrier. Emphasize staying low, breaking down (getting into a balanced stance), and reaching for the flag.

3. Group Skill Development (15-20 minutes)

Objective: Teach team-based skills & introduce basic offensive & defensive strategies.

Activities:

- **Route Running and Passing Drills:** Set up cones to represent different routes (slant, out, curl, post). Players take turns running routes while quarterbacks practice timing and accuracy. Rotate.
- **Basic Defensive Drills:** Teach basic defensive principles, like zone coverage or man-to-man defense. Use drills like the **Zone Defense Drill** or **1-on-1 Coverage Drill** to help players understand how to position themselves on the field.
- **Running Plays:** Practice basic running plays where the quarterback hands off the ball to a running back. Focus on ball security, proper handoff techniques, and running through open lanes.

4. Game Situations & Scrimmage (20-30 mins)

Objective: Simulate real game situations to teach strategy, positioning, teamwork, and communication.

Activities:

- **Controlled Scrimmage:** Split players into two teams and play a controlled scrimmage with a coach or volunteer acting as the referee. Focus on specific goals, such as completing a certain number of passes, practicing specific plays, or working on defensive coverage.
- **Situational Drills:** Run drills that simulate specific game situations, such as "3rd and Goal," "Last Play," or "No-Run Zone" scenarios. This helps players understand different game scenarios and how to react strategically.
- **Teach Rules and Strategy:** Take time to explain the rules, strategies, and positions to the players. This is especially important for younger kids who may be new to the sport.

5. Cool Down and Review (5-10 minutes)

Objective: Help players recover, reflect on the practice, and reinforce learning.

Activities:

- **Cool-Down Exercises:** End practice with a slow jog, followed by static stretching to help with muscle recovery.
- **Team Huddle:** Gather the team together for a brief discussion. Highlight what went well, areas for improvement, and encourage good sportsmanship. This is also a good time to answer any questions and provide positive reinforcement.
- **Fun Team Activity:** End with a quick, fun game or activity to keep the players excited about coming back for the next practice. This could be a non-football game or a relay race.

6. End with a Positive Note (2-3 minutes)

Objective: Reinforce the importance of teamwork, effort, and having fun.

Activities:

- **Celebrate Successes:** Recognize individual and team achievements from the practice, like a great catch, an accurate pass, or good sportsmanship.
- **Team Chant or Cheer:** Finish with a team cheer or chant to build camaraderie and team spirit.

Tips for Coaches

- **Keep It Fun and Engaging:** Use games and friendly competitions to keep the atmosphere light and enjoyable. The primary goal is to foster a love for the game.
- **Rotate Positions:** Give players a chance to experience different positions (quarterback, receiver, running back, defender) to understand the game better and develop a well-rounded skill set.
- **Encourage Teamwork and Communication:** Highlight the importance of communication on both offense and defense. Encourage players to talk to each other, call plays, and support teammates.
- **Focus on Fundamentals:** Reinforce basic skills in every practice. The foundation of good football is solid fundamentals in passing, catching, running, and flag-pulling.
- **Adapt Drills for Skill Level:** Adjust the difficulty and complexity of drills based on the players' age, experience, and skill level. Be ready to simplify or add layers to a drill depending on how the players are responding.

By keeping practices structured, varied, and fun, young players will not only improve their skills but also develop a love for the game of flag football.

Flag Football Drills: Grades 2-3

1. Flag Pulling Gauntlet

Objective: Improve flag-pulling skills, agility, and reaction time.

How to Play: Set up a line of cones about 5-7 yards apart to create a "gauntlet." Players form a single line on one end. One player at a time runs through the gauntlet while other players (positioned along the sides of the cones) try to pull their flags as they pass by. The runner tries to reach the other end without having their flags pulled. Rotate players so everyone gets a turn running and pulling flags.

2. Passing and Catching Partner Drills

Objective: Develop basic throwing and catching skills.

How to Play: Pair up players and give each pair a football. Have the players stand about 5 yards apart. They practice throwing and catching the ball with their partner using proper techniques. Gradually increase the distance between partners as their skills improve. Encourage quick releases and proper form, such as stepping into the throw and catching with soft hands.

3. Running Back Cone Drills

Objective: Improve agility, footwork, and ball-handling skills.

How to Play: Set up cones in a zig-zag pattern, about 5 yards apart. Players take turns running through the cones while holding a football. They must weave in and out of the cones, using sharp cuts and changes of direction. Focus on keeping the ball high and tight while making quick, sharp cuts around each cone.

4. Monkey in the Middle

Objective: Teach ball control, defensive positioning, and catching.

How to Play: Form a circle with 5-6 players and place one player in the middle ("the monkey"). Players in the circle pass the ball to each other while the "monkey" in the middle tries to intercept or deflect the pass. If the "monkey" catches or deflects the ball, the player who threw it becomes the new "monkey." Emphasize quick passes and good communication among teammates.

5. Mini Scrimmage with No-Run Zones

Objective: Teach the basics of offense and defense.

How to Play: Divide players into two small teams. Set up a mini field with cones marking the end zones and "no-run zones" (areas where teams must pass the ball rather than run). Play a modified scrimmage where each team has to complete a pass when in the "no-run zone" to continue advancing. Encourages passing plays, teamwork & communication. Rotate players so everyone gets to play offense and defense.

6. Quick Feet Drill

Objective: Improve footwork, speed, and agility.

How to Play: Use an agility ladder or place cones in a straight line about 1 foot apart. Players take turns running through the ladder or cones, practicing different footwork patterns (e.g., one foot in each space, two feet in each space, side steps). This drill enhances their ability to change directions quickly, which is important in both offense and defense.

7. QB and Receiver Routes Drill

Objective: Teach basic passing routes (e.g., slant, curl, out) and improve the timing and communication between quarterbacks and receivers.

How to Play: Set up cones to represent different routes at varying distances (5-10 yards). Assign one player as the quarterback and the rest as receivers. The quarterback practices different routes by calling out a route (e.g., "slant"), and the receiver runs the route and catches the pass. Rotate players so everyone has a chance to be the quarterback and a receiver.

8. Defensive Back Coverage Drill

Objective: Teach man-to-man defense, backpedaling, and staying close to the offensive player.

How to Play: Pair up players and assign one as the receiver and the other as the defensive back. The receiver runs a basic route (like a slant or out), and the defensive back practices staying close while keeping their eyes on the receiver's hips. Focus on footwork, not grabbing, and maintaining proper positioning.

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9. Zone Defense Introduction Drill

Objective: Introduce the concept of zone defense and improve spatial awareness.

How to Play: Divide the field into zones using cones. Assign 3-4 players to cover each zone. The offense runs basic plays, and the defenders practice covering their designated zones. Emphasize staying in the assigned area rather than chasing the ball or receiver.

10. Mini Scrimmage

Objective: Teach game flow, basic strategies, and teamwork in a realistic game setting.

How to Play: Divide players into two teams. Set up a mini field with end zones. Play a small-sided scrimmage with simplified rules (e.g., 5-second rush count, no blitzing). Emphasize teamwork, communication, and sportsmanship. Rotate players.

Flag Football Drills: Grades 4-5

1. Route Running and Passing Drill

Objective: Teach players how to run precise routes, improve timing, communication between qb & receivers.

How to Play: Set up cones to represent different routes (slant, out, in, post) at varying distances (5-15 yards). Assign one player as the quarterback and the others as receivers. The quarterback calls out a route, and the receiver runs that route, looking for a pass. Emphasize precise cuts, good route-running technique, and catching the ball away from the body. Rotate positions.

2. Zone Defense Drill

Objective: Teach the basics of zone defense, including positioning, communication, and reading the quarterback's eyes.

How to Play: Divide the field into zones using cones. Assign players to cover each zone. The offense runs plays against the zone defense. Defensive players must stay in their assigned zones, communicate, and switch assignments as needed. Coaches can give tips on how to read the quarterback's eyes and react to the play.

3. Flag Pulling Pursuit Drill

Objective: Improve flag-pulling technique and teach defenders how to take proper pursuit angles.

How to Play: Set up a grid with cones about 10 yards apart. Assign one player as the ball carrier and one or two players as defenders. The ball carrier tries to run to the opposite side while the defenders work on taking the right angles to pull their flag. Focus on staying low, breaking down (slowing down and getting into position), and reaching for the flag without grabbing the ball carrier.

4. Quarterback and Receiver Timing Drill

Objective: Develop timing, communication, and chemistry between quarterbacks and receivers.

How to Play: Set up a series of cones to indicate where receivers should make their cuts. Assign one player as the quarterback and others as receivers. Set up a series of cones to indicate where receivers should make their cuts. Assign one player as the quarterback and others as receivers.

5. Scrimmage Situations

Objective: Simulate game situations teach strategy, teamwork, communication.

How to Play: Divide players into two teams and set up a small field with end zones. Play short, focused scrimmages with specific goals (e.g., only passing plays, only running plays). Emphasize learning rules, teamwork, and communication on both offense and defense. Rotate players.

6. Defensive Back Coverage Drill

Objective: Teach man-to-man coverage skills, backpedaling, and breaking on the ball.

How to Play: Pair up players, assigning one as the receiver & the other as the defensive back. The receiver runs a route, & the defensive back covers them, focusing on staying close without making contact. Encourage good backpedaling technique, quick hips, & breaking on the ball. Rotate players.

7. Cone Running Back Drill

Objective: Improve agility, footwork, and ball-handling skills for running backs.

How to Play: Set up cones in a zig-zag or ladder pattern, spaced about 5 yards apart. Players take turns running through the cones while carrying a football. Focus on making sharp cuts around each cone, keeping the ball high and tight, and accelerating after each cut. To add difficulty, incorporate a defender who tries to pull the runner's flag at random points.

8. Interception Drill

Objective: Improve defensive awareness, ball skills, and catching.

How to Play: Have a quarterback and several defensive backs lined up in various positions. The quarterback throws passes to random receivers, and the defensive backs practice reading the quarterback's eyes, breaking on the ball, and making interceptions. Rotate players so everyone has a chance to play as a defensive back and a receiver.

9. Triangle Passing Drill

Objective: Improve passing accuracy, catching, and quick decision-making.

How to Play: Set up three cones in a triangle shape about 5-10 yards apart. Assign one player as the quarterback and the others as receivers. The quarterback stands in the middle of the triangle and passes to each receiver in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction. After catching, the receiver passes the ball back to the quarterback. Emphasize quick, accurate throws and clean catches.

10. Run and Pass Combination Drill

Objective: Develop the ability to make quick decisions about when to run and when to pass.

How to Play: Set up cones to mark a small field. Assign players to offense and defense. The offense runs a combination of run and pass plays against a live defense. The quarterback must decide, based on the defense's positioning, whether to hand off, run, or pass. This drill teaches decision-making under pressure and helps players understand how to read defenses.

11. End Zone Celebration Drill

Objective: Encourage players to practice scoring, celebrate team successes, and have fun.

How to Play: Set up a small field with two end zones. Split players into two teams. Players take turns running a short distance toward the end zone with the ball. After scoring a "touchdown," players practice a celebration (e.g., high fives, dances). Encourage creativity and positive reinforcement for good sportsmanship and team spirit.

12. Capture the Football

Objective: Teach teamwork, strategy, and flag-pulling in a fun setting.

How to Play: Divide players into two teams. Set up a field with a "safe zone" on each side, each containing several footballs. Players must try to "capture" the footballs from the opposing team's safe zone without getting their flags pulled. If a player's flag is pulled, they return to their side and perform a small exercise (e.g., 5 jumping jacks) before rejoining. The team with the most footballs at the end wins.

Flag Football Drills: Grades Middle School

1. Passing Tree Routes Drill

Objective: Teach precise route running and improve timing and communication between quarterbacks and receivers.

How to Play: Set up cones to represent different routes (slant, out, in, post, curl, fly) at varying distances (5-15 yards). One player is the quarterback, and the others are receivers. The quarterback calls out a route (e.g., "slant"), and the receiver runs that route, turning to catch the pass. Emphasize quick, sharp cuts, proper route-running, and catching with hands away from the body. Rotate players so everyone gets a chance to play both quarterback and receiver.

2. Flag Pulling and Pursuit Drill

Objective: Improve flag-pulling skills and teach defenders to take proper pursuit angles.

How to Play: Set up a grid or small area (10x10 yards) with cones. Assign one player as the ball carrier and one or two players as defenders. The ball carrier tries to reach the other side while the defenders try to pull their flag. Defenders should focus on breaking down (slowing down and getting low), staying balanced, and reaching for the flag without grabbing the ball carrier. Rotate roles to give everyone a chance to run and defend.

3. Zone Defense Drill

Objective: Teach the basics of zone defense, including positioning, communication, and reading the quarterback's eyes.

How to Play: Divide the field into zones using cones. Assign players to cover each zone. The offense runs plays against the zone defense. Defensive players must stay in their assigned zones, communicate, and switch assignments as needed. Coaches can give tips on how to read the quarterback's eyes and react to the play.

4. Quarterback Accuracy Challenge

Objective: Improve passing accuracy and decision-making for quarterbacks.

How to Play: Set up targets (like hula hoops or cones) at varying distances (5-20 yards) downfield. Each quarterback takes turns throwing to the targets, aiming to hit them as accurately as possible. Award points for hitting different targets, with more points for further distances. Rotate players so everyone gets a chance to throw.

5. 1-on-1 Receiver vs. Defender Drill

Objective: Improve route running for receivers and coverage skills for defenders.

How to Play: Set up a small field area (10x10 yards) with a line of scrimmage. Assign one player as a receiver and another as a defender. On "Go," the receiver runs a route, and the defender tries to cover them. The quarterback throws a pass to the receiver, and the defender attempts to intercept or deflect it. Rotate players to ensure everyone gets a chance to play as a receiver, defender, and quarterback.

6. Run and Pass Combination Drill

Objective: Develop the ability to make quick decisions about when to run and when to pass.

How to Play: Set up cones to mark a small field. Assign players to offense and defense. The offense runs a combination of run and pass plays against a live defense. The quarterback must decide, based on the defense's positioning, whether to hand off, run, or pass. This drill teaches decision-making under pressure and helps players understand how to read defenses.

7. Running Back Agility Drill

Objective: Improve agility, footwork, and ball-handling for running backs.

How to Play: Set up cones in a zig-zag or ladder pattern, spaced about 5 yards apart. Players take turns running through the cones while carrying a football. Focus on making sharp cuts around each cone, keeping the ball high and tight, and accelerating after each cut. To make it more challenging, add a defender who tries to pull the runner's flag at random points.

8. Defensive Back Shadow Drill

Objective: Teach defensive players how to stay with receivers and improve their coverage skills.

How to Play: Pair up players and assign one as the wide receiver and the other as the defensive back. The wide receiver runs a route, and the defensive back mirrors their movements, trying to stay close without making contact. Focus on proper backpedaling, footwork, and maintaining good defensive positioning.

9. Scrimmage Situations

Objective: Teach game flow, basic strategies, and teamwork in a realistic game setting.

How to Play: Divide players into two teams. Set up a mini field with cones marking the end zones. Play a small-sided scrimmage with specific goals (e.g., only passing plays, only running plays, last-play scenarios). Emphasize teamwork, communication, and sportsmanship. Rotate players through different positions to give them a chance to experience offense and defense.

10. Blitz Drill

Objective: Teach defensive players how to blitz effectively while maintaining discipline and avoiding penalties.

How to Play: Assign one or two players as blitzers and others as offensive linemen and the quarterback. The blitzers practice timing their blitz, getting around the offensive linemen, and applying pressure to the quarterback. The offensive linemen work on blocking techniques and picking up blitzes. Rotate roles to give everyone experience on both sides of the ball.

11. End Zone Passing Drill

Objective: Teach the offense how to execute passing plays in tight spaces, such as the red zone or end zone.

How to Play: Set up a small field area (15x15 yards) to represent the end zone. Assign players to offense and defense. The offense runs passing plays, trying to score while the defense focuses on covering receivers tightly and intercepting or deflecting passes. Rotate players through different roles to ensure everyone gets experience

12. Interception Drill

Objective: Improve defensive awareness, ball skills, and catching.

How to Play: Have a quarterback and several defensive backs lined up in various positions. The quarterback throws passes to random receivers, and the defensive backs practice reading the quarterback's eyes, breaking on the ball, and making interceptions. Rotate players so everyone has a chance to play as a defensive back and a receiver.