



**Youth Flag Football
Coaching Packet**

GENERAL YOUTH COACHING PRINCIPLES

INTRO

Coaching is an extremely important responsibility. A good coach always places the best interests of a player before winning. Coaching youth sports is a difficult job because parents expect professional results from people who are mostly volunteers. High school, college and pro coaches start as assistants and work their way up through years of intense professional training. The players and their parents have placed you in a position of leadership, and you have a responsibility to give them your best effort. Additionally, this football experience will play a significant factor in determining whether the players continue participating in football. If you follow the coaching guidelines and general principles below, the players and their parents will be better served.

COACHING TIPS

Whether you are an experienced coach or a novice taking the reins of your first team, your main goal should be to create a fun and safe learning environment for your players. Many of the skills your players will practice and play with are just like those of their NFL heroes. Feel free to emphasize this connection to the real-life game!

EVERYBODY PLAYS

NFL Flag games were designed to make it easy for every player to participate in their team's success. While size and skill certainly come into play when the action starts, your coaching should emphasize the aspect of "working together."

TACKLE TACKLING EARLY

Don't let your practices dissolve into a giant pile of rambunctious kids. For both their safety and your sanity, make sure to discourage any tackling or roughness early on. Remind them that they won't help their team in a game by tackling or being rough.

SPORTSMANSHIP RULES

Help your players be good sports. After a game, shake hands with or do a cheer for the other team. Applaud good play by both sides. Treat officials with respect. While imitating you, your team won't even recognize the good lesson they're learning.

LET THEM PLAY FOOTBALL

The temptation to be another Don Shula or Bill Walsh will have to wait. This is NFL Flag. While teaching football skills and strategies is important, keep your lessons as simple as possible. Once your team grasps the basics, move on to more advanced ideas. Overloading young players with too much information too early can cause confusion for them and headaches for you.

HAVE FUN!

TEN COACHING GUIDELINES

1. A coach should be enthusiastic without being intimidating. They should be sensitive to the children's feelings and genuinely enjoy spending time with them. A coach should be dedicated to serving children and understand that football provides physical and emotional growth for its participants. Remember, flag football is for the children.
2. A coach needs to realize that they are a teacher, not a drill sergeant. They should help children learn and work to improve their skills. Personal gains are never a consideration. The job does not depend on winning. The best interest of the child transforms into the best interests of the game.
3. The safety and welfare of the children never can be compromised. A coach will consider these factors above all others.
4. Be patient. Don't push children beyond limits in regards to practice. Children have many daily pressures – the football experience should not be one of them. Playing football should be fun.
5. Care more about the players as people than as athletes. The youth football program is a means to an end, not an end in itself.
6. A coach should encourage players to dream and set lofty goals. It is important to remain positive and refrain from discouraging remarks. Negative comments are remembered far more often than positive affirmations.
7. Remember that the rules of the game are designed to protect the participants, as well as to set a standard for competition. Never circumvent or take advantage of the rules by teaching deliberate misconduct. A coach who puts his or her opponents' team at risk should not be involved with children.
8. Be the first person to demonstrate good sportsmanship. Take a low profile during the game and allow the kids to be the center of attention.
9. Parents and players place a lot of trust and confidence in the coach. The coach has an important role in molding the athletic experience of the child.
10. A coach can measure success by the respect he gets from his or her players, regardless of victories or defeats. Children who mature socially and physically while participating in sports are the best indication of good coaching.

FLAG FOOTBALL TIPS

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

Go for First Downs NOT Touchdowns. This can be accomplished by using short passes and a running plays. Mix in long passes and trick plays to keep the defense honest and to catch them off guard.

OFFENSIVE TIPS

THROWING A SPIRAL

Hold the ball near the back with your fingers over the laces - Keep your elbow in tight to your body and the ball up by your ear - Point your non-throwing shoulder toward your target.

LEADING THE RECEIVER

As a quarterback you don't want to throw the ball to where the receiver is but rather where he/she is going to be - Practicing your routes with your receivers will help you figure out how far you can lead them with your throws.

RECEIVING A PASS

Form a triangle with your hands (between your index fingers and thumbs) - Keep your eye on the ball at all times - Try to keep the ball away from your body - Keep your hands soft so that you can cushion the ball - Once you have caught the ball, tuck it away so that you don't fumble it.

PLAY ACTION

Using a fake handoff can distract the defensive backs enough to get the receivers open for a pass - Try a few running plays first to set up the play fake then throw the ball down the field.

SHORT PASSING ROUTES

Short passes are safe and effective ways of moving the ball - Short passes can be run towards the sideline (out), towards the middle of the field (in), or just by turning back toward the QB when you have found a hole in the defense (button hook) - Often a short pass can turn into a big gain with a few quick moves.

LONG PASSES

They can be run towards the sideline (corner pattern), towards the middle of the field (post pattern), or just by running straight (fly pattern) - A long pass is most effective when the defense is caught off guard. Using a mixture of running plays and short passes will open up the field for the long bomb.

DEFENSIVE TIPS

PULLING THE FLAG

Pulling the Flag - Watch the ball carrier's hips as opposed to his/her feet or head - Stay low and lunge at the flag - If you grab anything but the flag, let go immediately so that you don't get a penalty.

PLAYING ZONE DEFENSE

Each defensive back is responsible for an area as opposed to a player - The advantage of this system is that you can keep an eye on the receiver and the quarterback at the same time. As receivers come through your area, try to anticipate where the quarterback wants to throw it and beat the receiver to the spot.

PLAYING MAN TO MAN DEFENSE

Leave some space between you and the receiver (this is your cushion) - As the receiver starts his/her route you can start to back pedal - When the receiver makes his/her break you can turn and run with them to try to break up the pass.

Skills & Drills - Drill #1

Warm-Up Drill: "Jingle-Jangle"

This is a good way to begin practice. After a short stretching period, this drill gets players loose and warmed up, while also helping them practice their agility and footwork.

Purpose:

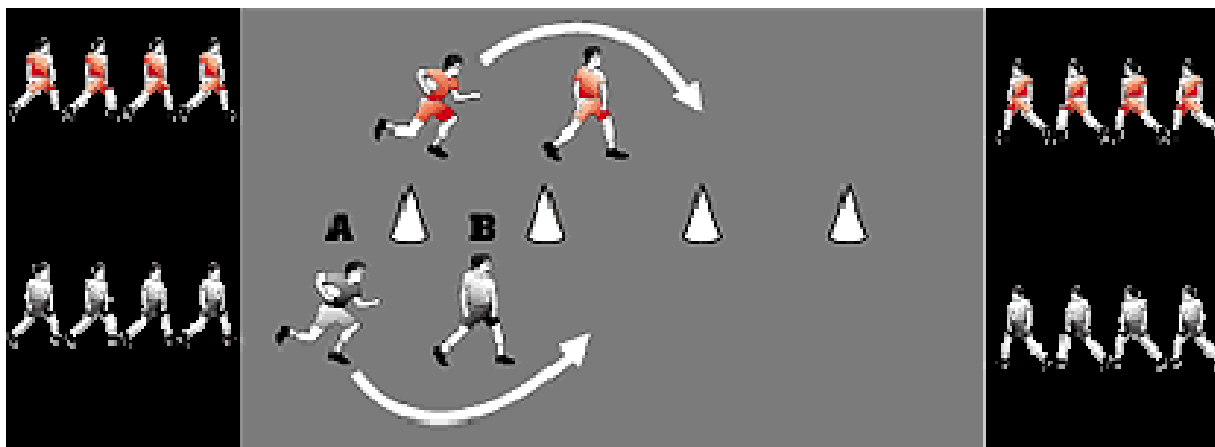
Improve balance, footwork, and change of direction.

Drill Outline :

- Place cones at corners of 15-yard square. Line up players at one corner of square. Players then:
 1. sprint to first cone
 2. side-step to second cone
 3. backpedal to third cone
 4. sprint back to beginning of line.
- Throw a football to each player as he or she finishes the drill. Repeat drill to other side after everyone has had a turn.

Skills & Drills - Drill #2

Center QB Exchange



Purpose: To develop proper snapping technique.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place in even lines. Place cones in middle of drill four yards apart. One football per team; the entire class can participate.

Drill Outline:

- This is a relay race.
- The quarterback (A) and center (B) on each team start the race.
- The center (B) snaps directly to the QB(A). The center will stand still while the QB runs to the next cone.
- The previous(A) snaps to (B), then (B) snaps to (A) and so on, until course is completed.
- The race is continued until each participant gets a turn.

Progression: Shotgun snap.

Key Coaching Points:

- Center must place the ball on the ground before snapping.

Skills & Drills - Drill #3

Passing Drill: Progressive QB

This drill helps refine and improve passing technique by concentrating on proper arm and hand movement.

Development Goals

Perfect throwing motion while using only the throwing arm.

Coaching Points

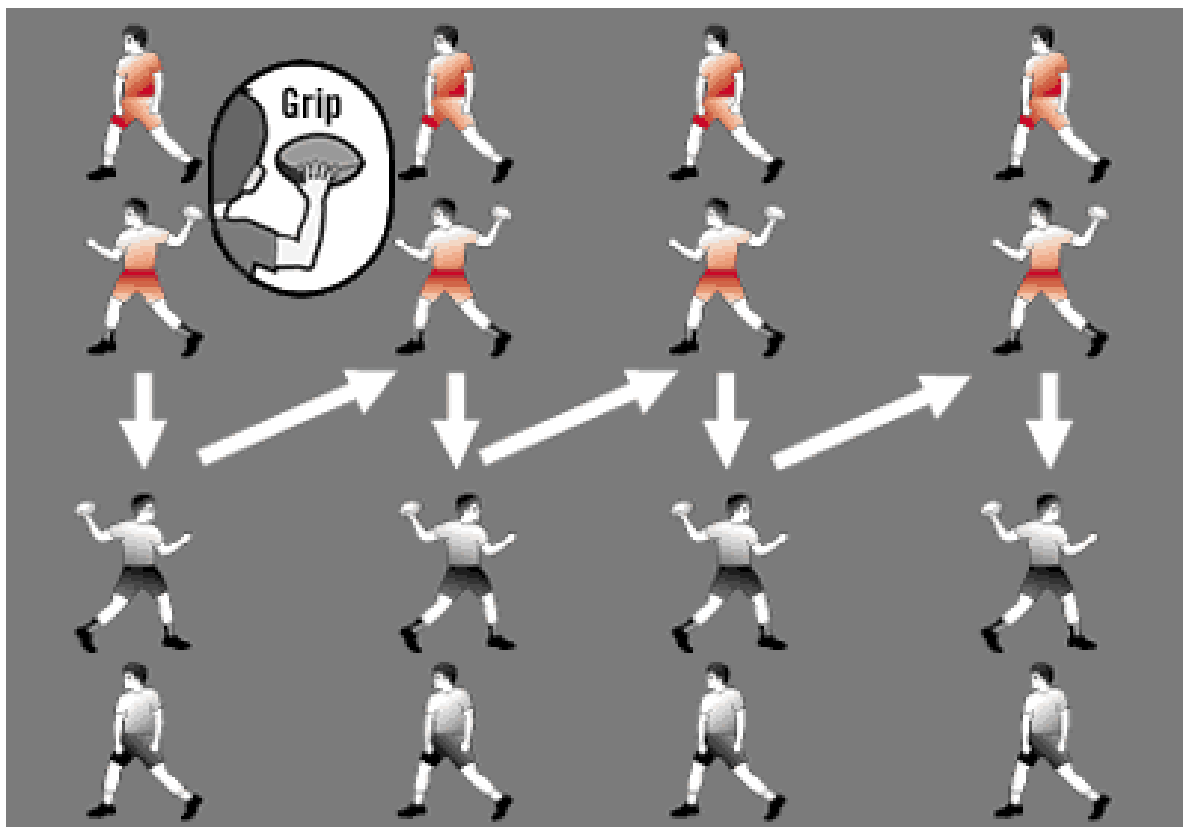
Pair off participants into two parallel lines. Players start on both knees, throwing to their partners five yards away. Show players how to follow through with their arm, so that their thumbs end up pointing down. Have each player begin with football held above his or her waist. Demonstrate how to throw from no higher than their ear.

Progressions

After several throws, have players switch to kneeling on right knee. Then after several throws that way, have them switch to left knee. Next, have them throw standing up with feet together. Finally, have them practice a three-step drop, then a five-step drop before throwing.

Skills & Drills - Drill #4

Passing



Purpose: To develop proper passing technique.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place players opposite from each other about 3 yards apart. The entire class can participate if there are enough footballs. With a limited amount of footballs, place students behind each other and have them wait for a turn or pass the footballs available in a zig-zag pattern. (Shown above.)

Drill Outline: Participants pass the football back and forth to their partner.

Progression:

- Begin with the participants on both knees facing each other.
- Kids throwing from their knees will focus on the throwing motion without the use of their legs.
- Progress to right knee up and then switch to left knee up.
- Next, have players stand straight up and pass with feet apart.

Key Coaching Points:

- Passing motion is the same as throwing a baseball, javelin, or handball.
- The hand without the football points to the target or the receiver.
- Make sure kids follow through on their throws.
- Point - step - throw.
- The receiver forms a target with both hands, palms facing out with thumbs and pointing fingers touching.
- The receiver's fingers should form a triangle.

Skills & Drills - Drill #5

Individual Pass Patterns



5 Yard Curl:

The WR runs up the field 5 yards, stops, and returns back towards the QB.



8 Yard Post:

A WR runs up field 8 yards and cuts toward the center of the field on a 45-degree angle



Post Corner:

The WR runs up the field. At 8 yards he cuts toward the center of the field and after 2 yards runs towards the corner of the end zone.



5 Yard Out:

The WR runs up the field 5 yards and cuts to the sideline.



Streak:

The WR runs straight up the field as fast as possible.



5 Yard Smash:

The WR runs up the field 5 yards and then turns toward the QB and side shuffles with body facing the QB.

Skills & Drills - Drill #6

Passing and Receiving: Run & Shoot

This drill helps players understand simple passing routes, from the perspective of both quarterback and receiver.

Development Goals

Passers: accuracy and how to lead receivers

Receivers: how to run pass routes

Defensive Backs: how to watch receivers and cut to the ball.

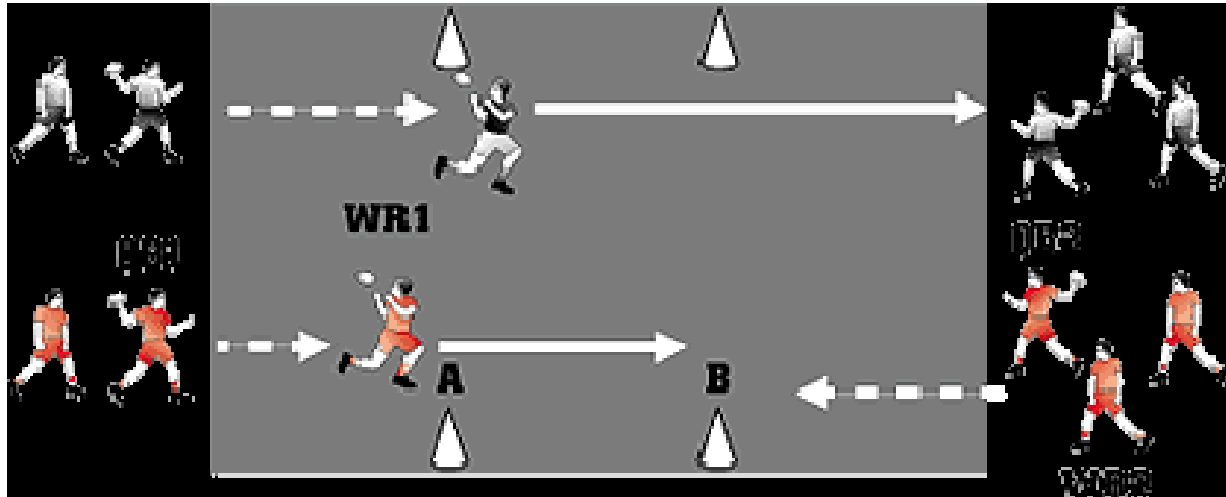
Coaching Points

Divide your team into three groups. The first player in line is the first passer; the second goes out to play defensive back; the third is the receiver. The outside groups run simple 10-yard square-out patterns, while the middle group runs 10-yard turn-ins or buttonhooks.

Rotate each line this way: After passing, the quarterback becomes the next receiver; the next player in line becomes the passer; the first receiver becomes the defensive back; and the first defensive back moves on to the next group. Make sure players get chances at all three positions.

Skills & Drills - Drill #7

Passing & Receiving



Purpose: To develop running, passing, and receiving skills.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area and divide the team into even groups. Set cones 5 yards from each end line and 10 yards apart. Each team requires one football so the entire class can participate.

Drill Outline:

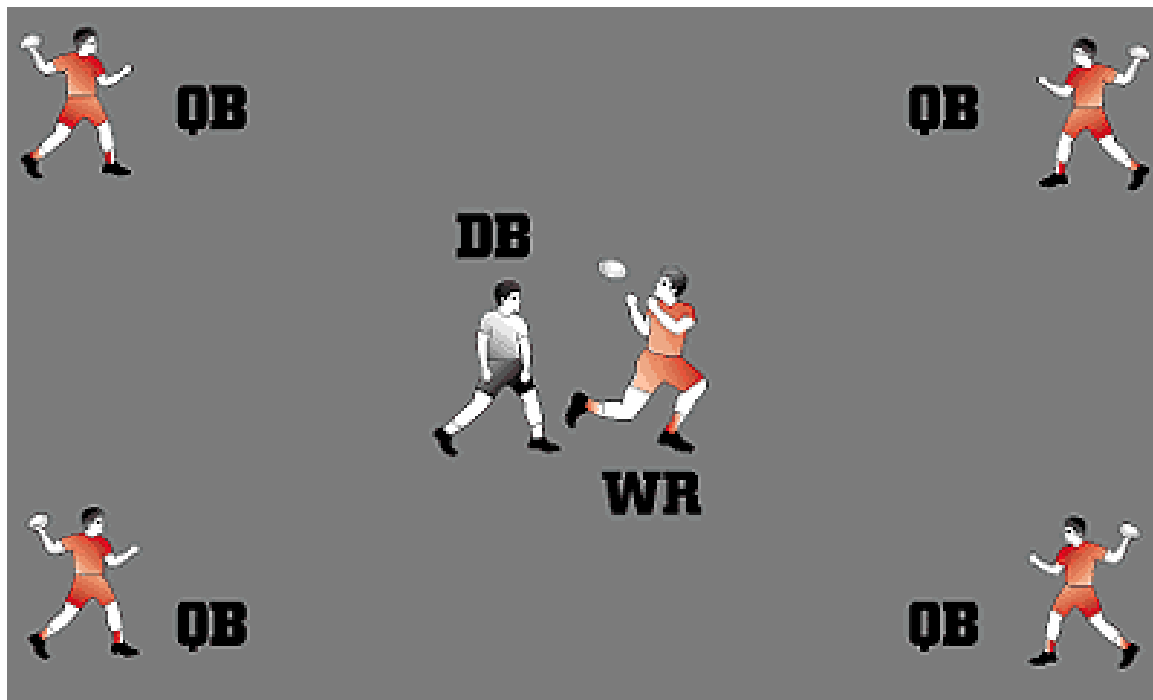
- This is a relay race.
- The object is for QB 1 to pass to WR 1, who has run to cone (A) to catch the ball.
- The second participant in line is WR 2.
- WR 2 runs to cone (B) and repeats the drill.
- The drill is repeated until every participant has a turn.
- If the ball is dropped, the WR picks it up and continues with the drill.

Key Coaching Points:

- WR must stop and completely turn around giving the QB a big target.
- WR must give a solid handoff to the QB when returning to line.
- After each relay race, a WR becomes the new QB.

Skills & Drills - Drill #8

Passing & Receiving



Purpose: For a WR to find an open area in order to catch a pass.

Organization: Set out a 10 x 10-yard area. Divide the players into groups of six, five players on offense and a single player on defense. Station four players in the corners of the area and a lone receiver, shadowed by a defender inside the area. This can be duplicated to allow full participation for entire class. One football is needed per group.

Drill Outline:

- The object is for the QB's to pass the football around until an opportunity arises to throw the football to the WR.
- The length of the drill is 30 seconds. Six points are awarded for each reception and the defense is awarded three points for an interception.
- Either switch to a whole new group of players at QB, WR, and DB. Or, switch kids on the field into new positions or bring new kids into game.

Progression:

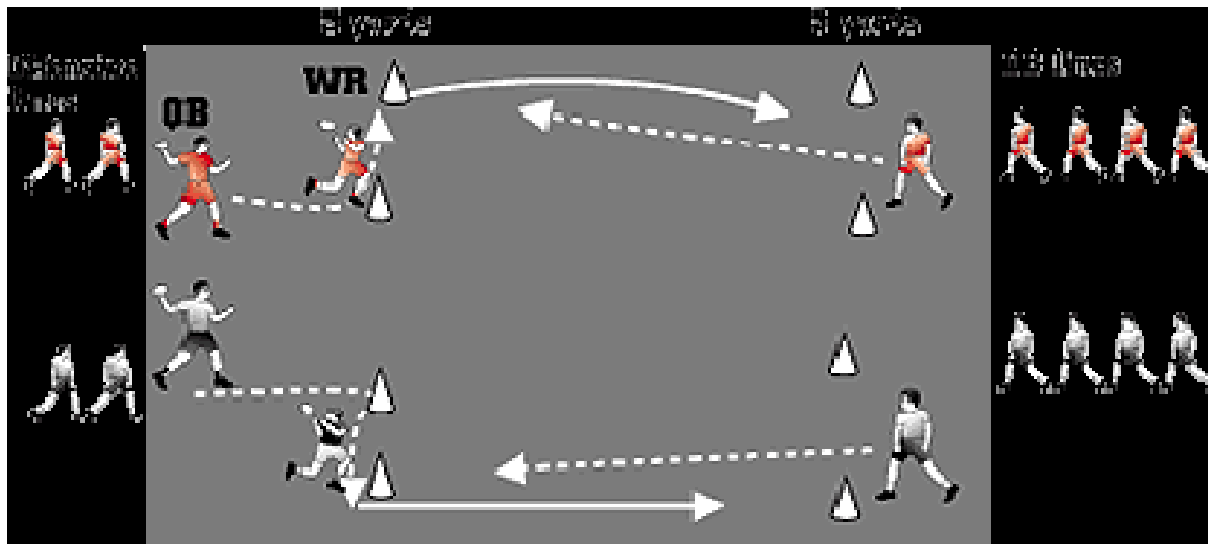
- Lower drill time to (20) seconds in length.
- Add an additional DB to the field.
- If the football is intercepted, put the QB who threw the interception on defense.

Key Coaching Points:

- How WR and QB communicate.
- Defenders should focus on WR hips not shoulders.

Skills & Drills - Drill #9

Passing & Receiving



Purpose: To develop proper pass patterns and defensive skills.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area and place two sets of cones on either end of the drill, 5 yards off the end line. Divide into two equal teams. One half of each team starts on offense, the other half starts on defense. Each team has a football. Use the entire class in one drill.

Drill Outline:

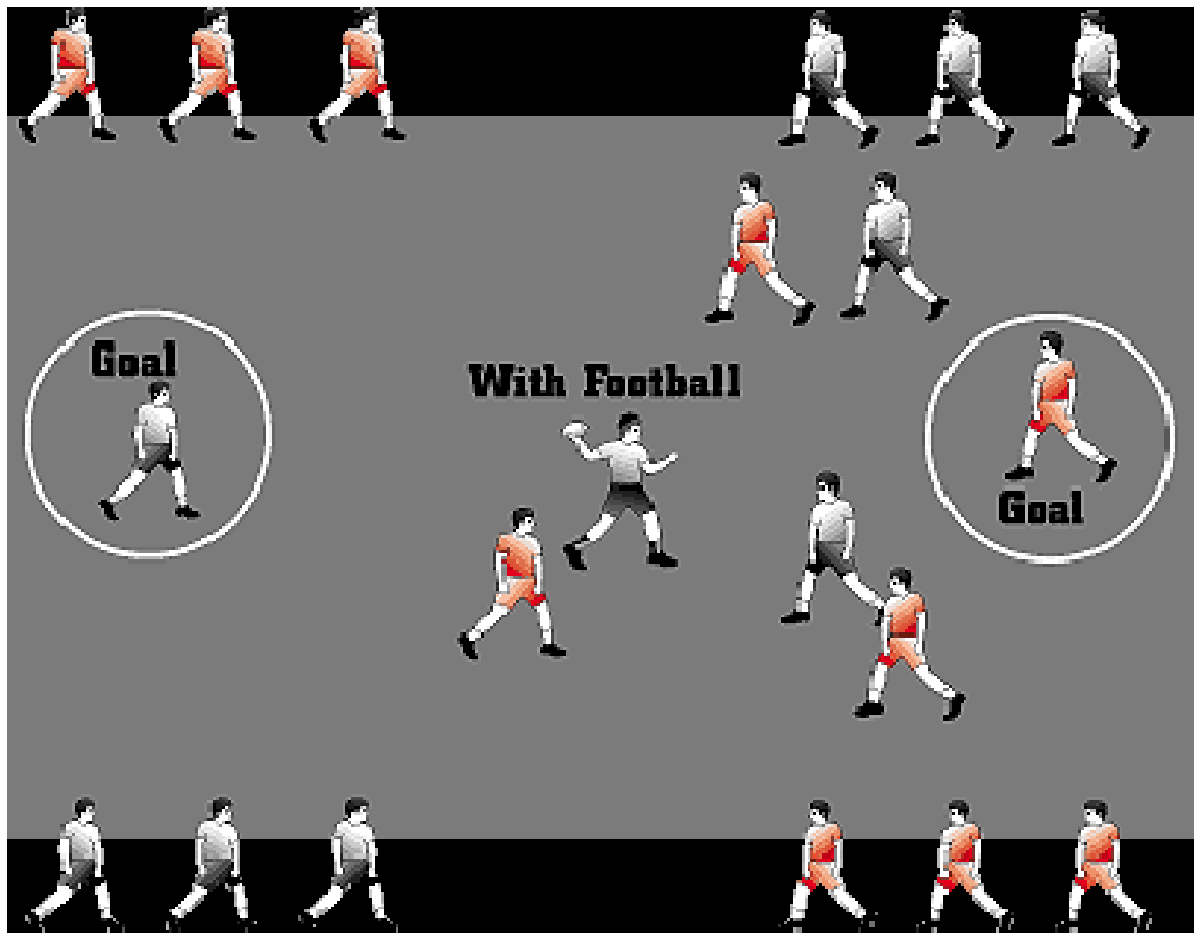
- The WR snaps the football to the QB and the WR runs a 5-yard "out" pattern. The cones are set out to indicate direction.
- When the ball is snapped, the DB runs to the area where the WR will try to catch the football.
- If a catch is made, the WR must then try to run past the DB and score without having his/her flag pulled.
- The WR then goes to the end of the DB line and the DB goes to end of the offensive line on their own team.
- The WR will give the football to the DB after the drill. The DB will hand the football to the QB in the DB's new line.
- 6 points are awarded for each TD. The coach keeps score.

Key Coaching Points:

- QB passes to where the WR will be at end of his/her pattern. LI>WR looks back for football when he makes the turn to the second cone.
- DB watches WR's hips for any fakes, not the shoulders or head.

Skills & Drills - Drill #10

Passing & Receiving



Purpose: To develop proper receiving and passing skills. Teach participants how to spread out and use the entire field.

Organization: Set out a 40 x 40-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place players opposite each other across the field. The entire class can participate.

Drill Outline:

- Eight to ten participants start on the field, the remaining players stand on the sidelines.
- This game concept and playing area is similar to basketball, but without the baskets or dribbling.
- The ball starts with one player at the center of the field.
- The object is to throw the football to a teammate in the circle or goal.
- The player with the ball has to pass to his/her teammates inside the game or can get assistance from teammates on the sidelines.
- The player with the ball can only take two steps, similar to basketball. The players in the playing area without the ball are free to move around.
- The ball must be passed within 10 seconds or the other team gets possession of the ball.
- The idea is to try to knock down or intercept a pass. If the ball is dropped or intercepted, the team on defense is awarded possession of the football.
- 6 points are awarded each time the ball is passed to a player in the goal area. The player in the goal cannot leave that area.

Progression:

Add players to the field, one per team.

Key Coaching Points:

- Stress the importance of spreading out and being in position to receive a pass from a teammate.
- It is important to get open and not bunch up because, in a game situation, the offense has an advantage when there is more room to move.

Skills & Drills - Drill #11

Pass Pattern Combinations



Streak Out:
#1 WR runs a 5-yard out toward the sideline and WR #2 runs a streak.



Post Out:
WR #1 runs a post and WR #2 runs a 5-yard out.



Curl Post Corner:
WR #1 runs a 5-yard curl and WR #2 runs a post.



Streak Curl:
#1 WR runs a streak and #2 WR runs a 5 yard-curl inside.



Corner Smash:
WR #1 runs a corner and WR #2 runs a 5-yard smash.

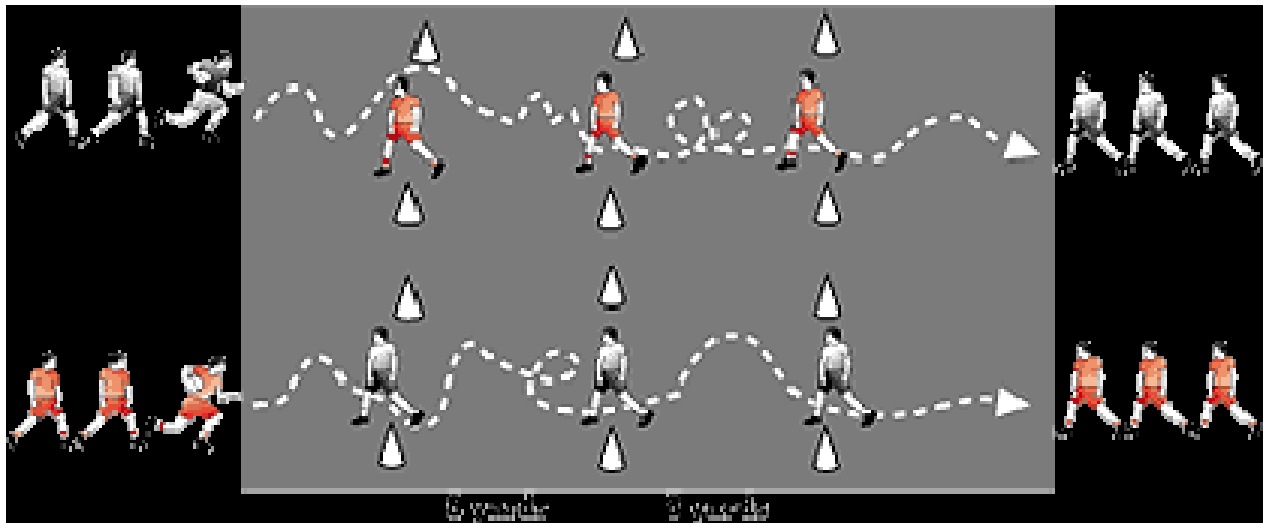


Twin Curl:
WR #1 and WR #2 both run 5-yard curls. This play is used in short yardage situations.

*On all these patterns, #1 is an option if #2 is covered, and vice versa.

Skills & Drills - Drill #13

Running with the Ball



Purpose: To develop running skills and avoid having the flag pulled.

Organization: Set out a 40 x 40-yard area. Place cones 8 yards apart to simulate a mini-end zone; one ball per team.

The entire class can participate in one drill, or duplicate the cone set-up if space permits.

Drill Outline:

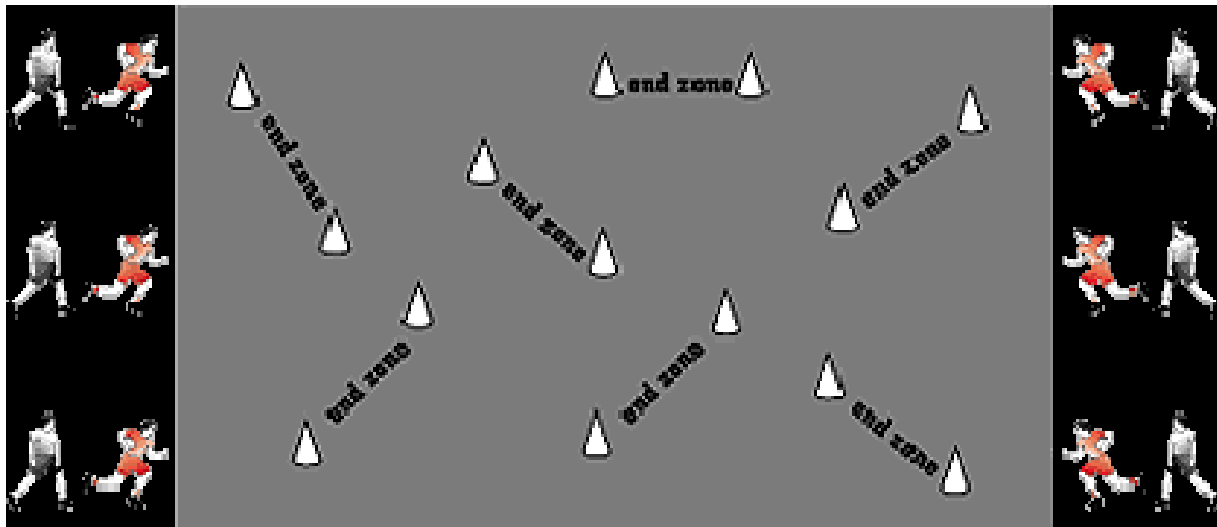
- Relay race between teams. Drill is completed when all RBs have run through the mini end zone once.
- There are 3 mini-end zones for the RB to run through.
- Offensive team has to play against the other team's defense.
- RB has to run through three mini-end zones and avoid the defenders in each.
- The DB attempts to pull the RB flag and stop him/her from scoring.
- DB's are awarded 3 points for each flag pulled. Points are counted after the race.
- The RB is awarded 6 points for each successful TD.
- The RB must run directly to the end of the line after handing off the football to a teammate on the other side of the drill.
- Offensive and defensive players are switched after each relay race is completed.
- If both RBs flags are removed before reaching the last DB, the RBs run back to the next RB in line and hands off the ball.

Key Coaching Points:

- RB plays with head up.
- DB watches the movement of RB's hips, not the head or shoulders.

Skills & Drills - Drill #14

Running With the Ball



Purpose: To develop running skills and avoid having the flag pulled.

Organization: Set out a 40 x 40-yard area. Place cones 2 yards apart to simulate a mini-end zone. Recommended for six pairs of players, the maximum number of kids is 20. If cones are not available, marks on the ground or floor, tshirts, or tape can be used. Balls are optional.

Drill Outline:

- Pair players up - one as a RB and one as a DB. The DB is in back of the RB and chasing the RB from behind.
- RB's should carry a football (if available).
- Each RB starts off on the end line at either side of the playing area.
- The DBs start 5 yards behind the RBs.
- On the coach's whistle, the RBs attempt to cross through the mini-end zones without getting their flags pulled by the pursuing DBs.
- The DB must chase the RB.
- Both flags are pulled, RB is out. If one flag pulled, the RB keeps going.
- Any end zone can be crossed and there is no order in which the end zones have to be crossed.
- The drill lasts 45 seconds and then you switch RB's to DB and DB's to RB.

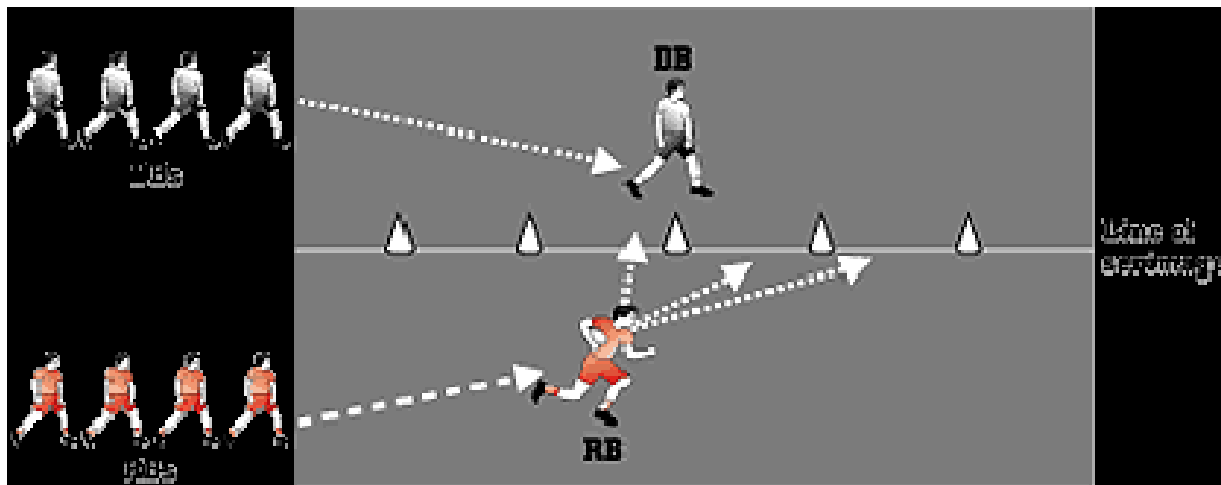
Progression: Shorten time to 30 seconds.

Key Coaching Points:

- RBs run plays with their heads up.
- DB watches the movement of RB's hips, not his/her head or shoulders.

Skills & Drills - Drill #15

Defense



Purpose: To develop defensive back skills.

Organization: Set out a 10 x 20-yard area. Place the cones five yards apart. One football is needed. The entire class can participate in this drill which, can be duplicated for more players if space permits.

Drill Outline:

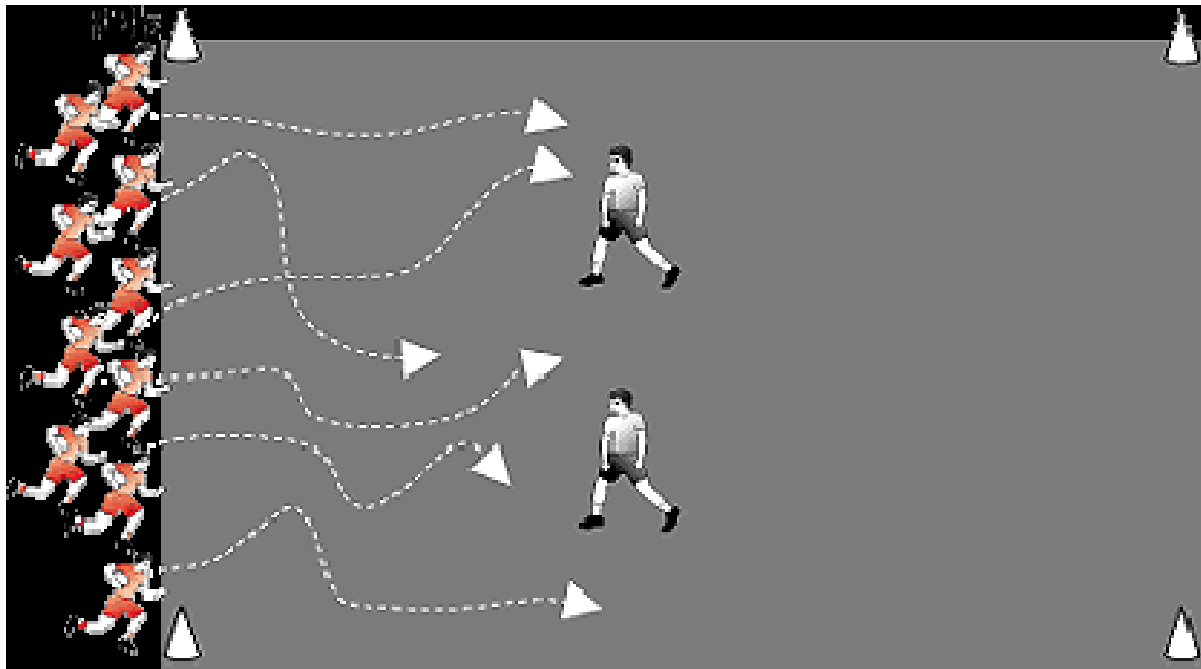
- The object is for the RB to run along the line of scrimmage and select an area between the cones to run through.
- RB starts with the football. On coach's signal, RB begins running. The DB must mirror the RB and attempt to capture the RB's flag before the RB selects a hole between the cones.
- This drill simulates making a one-on-one flag capture. Progression: Progress to two defensive players.

Key Coaching Points:

- RB must keep head up and the football firmly tucked away.
- DB must keep shoulders square and head and eyes looking upfield.
- DB watches the RB's hips.

Skills & Drills - Drill #16

Defense



Purpose: To develop running skills and avoid the DB. Also teaches RBs to run to an open area.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. 10 players start at one end zone, each with a football (if available). Two DBs are stationed in the middle of the field.

Drill Outline:

- The object is for the RBs to run past the DBs to the opposite end zone without getting their flags pulled.
- If a RB has his/her flag pulled, he/she sits out.
- Stop the drill after RBs reach the opposite end zone. Identify kids with pulled flags and allow players to catch their breath.
- The drill continues then by changing direction until there is one RB remaining.

Progression: Instead a RB sitting out after his/her flag is pulled, have him switch to a DB and assist in pulling other RB's flags.

Key Coaching Points:

- DBs should run to where the RB is going, not to where they are.
- Watch RB's waist, not his/her head or shoulders.

Skills & Drills - Drill #17

Defense



Purpose: To develop the defensive skills of pulling the flag and following a WR.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Pair up 10-12 participants. The coach gives each team a name. The entire class can play, or duplicate drill if space permits.

Drill Outline:

- This is a mirror drill.
- Players must "mirror" and stay with the player lined up across from them.
- When the coach calls out a team name, that team becomes the offense and tries to score in the defensive team's end zone. A score is worth 6 points.
- If a player has his/her flag pulled they are out for that one drill.
- Defensive players can go after other offensive players if they have pulled the flag of their partner.
- Offensive players have 45 seconds to score. Each score is worth 6 points.

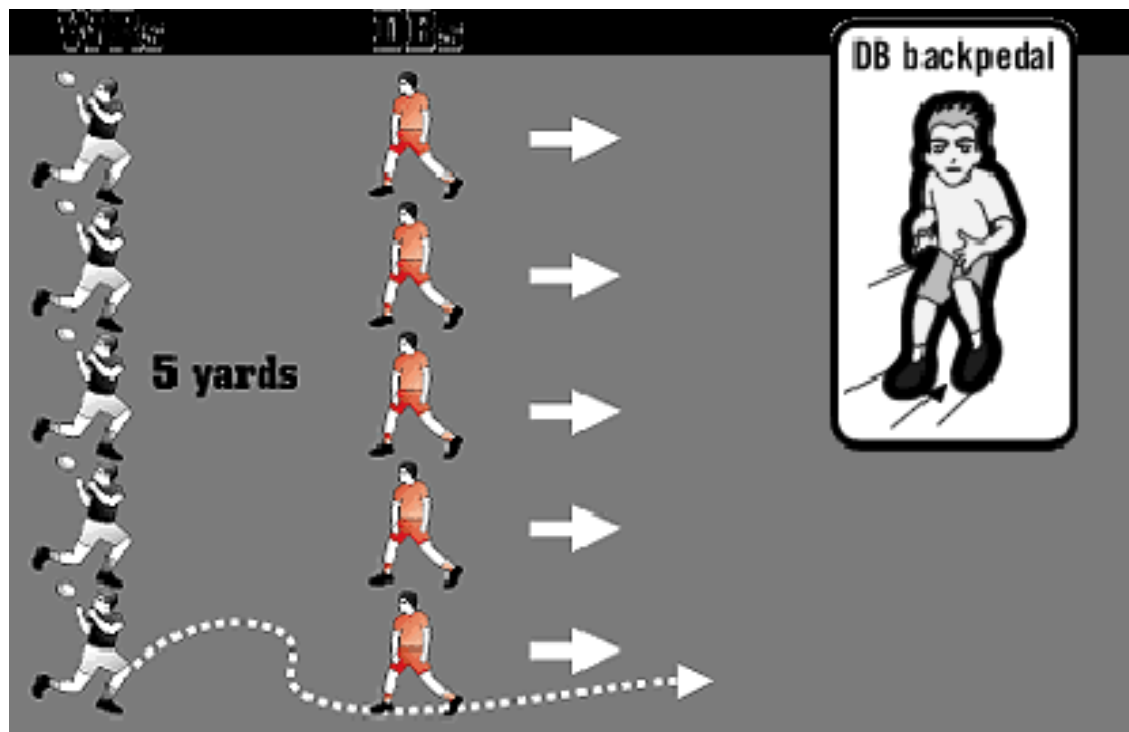
Progression: Coach will lower the time limit to 30 seconds. Coach keeps track of offensive player scores and subtracts 3 points for players who had their flags pulled.

Key Coaching Points:

- DB practices staying in front of offensive player.

Skills & Drills - Drill #18

Defense



Purpose: To develop defensive skills of backpedaling and pulling the flag.

Organization: Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Pair up 10-12 participants or as many as space allows.

Drill Outline:

- Pair up kids - one group is WRs, the other DBs.
- Each DB will backpedal and "mirror" the WR. All players will start in slow motion on the instructor's command.
- Switch, making WRs play as DBs. Progress to half speed.
- Switch positions again. Now go to full speed. On the instructor's whistle, the WRs will try to run past the DBs, who are backpedaling.
- During the drill, the instructor calls out "GO", the DB is now allowed to pull the flag of the WR who is still running for the end zone.
- The "GO" simulates the WR catching the football.

Progression: The coach will pass a football to an open offensive player when "GO" is called.

Key Coaching Points:

- DB stays in front of offensive player.
- DB watches WR's waist and hips.