



# Introduction to NFL Flag Football



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## NFL Flag in a school context

Integrates Students of All Abilities

Integration in Other Curriculum Subjects (e.g. History / English)

Progressional Practices Develop Core skills and Movements for Key Stages 1 and 2

Coeducationa

Cheerleading

Integration in Regular Sports Curriculum (Flags – Balls)

Spans Classes /Grades / Age Groups

School -

Can Be Played Basically Anywhere

Rules and Playing Field Can Be Adjusted to Abilities of the Students

Low Costs (Equipment & Uniforms)

Transfer of Learning for Other Sports

Integration in After-School Clubs

Teaches Key Citizenship Skills:  
Social Competence  
Communication and Teamwork  
Sense of Responsibility

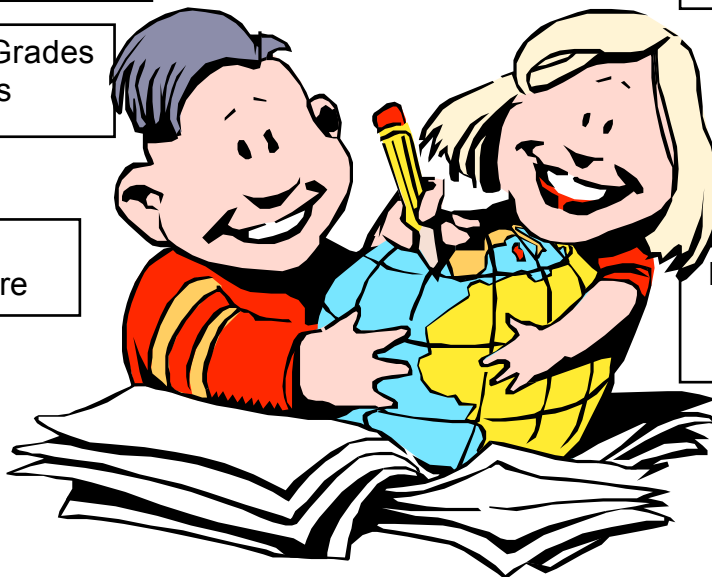
Various Types of Competition

Can Be played in Break and Lunch Times

Non-Contact Version

Highly Stimulative in Nature  
Less Demanding of skills

Trend Sport / American Way Of Life





## **NFL Flag**

The game of Flag football and its related practices offers teachers a great vehicle to deliver key aspects of the National Curriculum for PE and pupils the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills through a dynamic, inclusive and safe sporting experience. Equally, it can become a valuable part of an after-school sport programme and, in both cases, can provide a firm foundation for progression both in the sport of football and a range of other sports.

For younger children (especially those at Key Stage 2), the progressive practices which can build to participating in the full game of NFL Flag aid in the development of the core movement skills which underpin athletic development including running, throwing and jumping. It also introduces agility, balance, co-ordination and speed – the ABCs of athletic development.

For older pupils (around the age of Key Stage 3) the progressive framework builds in the development of more sport-specific skills and also an increased awareness and recognition of tactics and strategy in a more game-focused context. These skills and the principles of the tactics and strategies can both facilitate, and be enhanced by, participation in complementary sports, for example, rugby union and netball.

The nature of the game of NFL Flag and its practices allows for pupil differentiation in a range of areas, from body size through to ability to execute the skills of the game. This contributes to making the game an inclusive one, something maintained over time as players can specialise in a range of playing positions.

These characteristics contribute to make NFL Flag football a potentially valuable part of a unit or scheme of work in Physical Education and a great game for extra-curricular opportunities.

### **Demands Beyond Those of Daily Motor Activity - A Health and Fitness Focus**

The need for people, especially young people, to have an active lifestyle is increasingly recognised, both with respect to sport's role in the wider social agenda and with respect to the development of talented athletes.

The dynamic nature of NFL Flag and its related practices means the game can contribute to this, from contributing to the development of the athletic ABCs and core movement skills which in part, underpin long-term physical activity involvement in younger children through to embracing general physical conditioning and more sport- and individual-specific fitness.



## **Learning Success -The Motivation and Achievement of the Pupils**

Students can be taught to play NFL Flag on a basic level quickly. The practices for younger children can be delivered and differentiated in such a way that they can achieve success and progression whilst having fun, which can positively impact on motivation.

As the pupils grow older and more accomplished in their sports literacy, it can take a relatively short time for the pupils to work in firstly adapted games of NFL Flag and finally the full version using simple then increasingly complex strategy, again, having the potential to positively motivation, especially with adolescents learning by playing is highly stimulative. It has been shown again and again that, because of the high motivation level, learning successes are archived more quickly and that often, especially with beginners, technical elements can be converted in casual game situations which, in drills and practice situations, were previously perceived as drudgery.

It is often noted that playing is generally more fun than practicing. All goals associated with sports are doomed to failure if the students do not enjoy it. The practices associated with NFL Flag are, therefore, focused not only on learning but equally on maximising enjoyment

...experiencing new things:

Introducing NFL Flag into the school often means confronting the pupils with a relatively new sporting experience but one which they may have a foundation of many of the skills and abilities necessary to underpin participation. NFL Flag brings not only the inherent characteristics of the game which make it so appealing but also a broader appeal which links the game with an aspirational lifestyle - the positive images of Americana and of the top athletes.

## **Health and Safety**

If students use the proper equipment (shoes, sports clothing and flag belts), NFL Flag is not a dangerous sport. The injury statistics for every level bear this out impressively. There is no direct contact with the opponent. Players attack flags on opponent's hips and not the opponent themselves. When a pass is not caught (incomplete) or the ball is dropped, play is stopped immediately, which keeps players from diving after the ball. In addition, jumping at an opponent is forbidden in general. As with every sport, warm-up exercises are necessary to prepare the students properly for the following game.



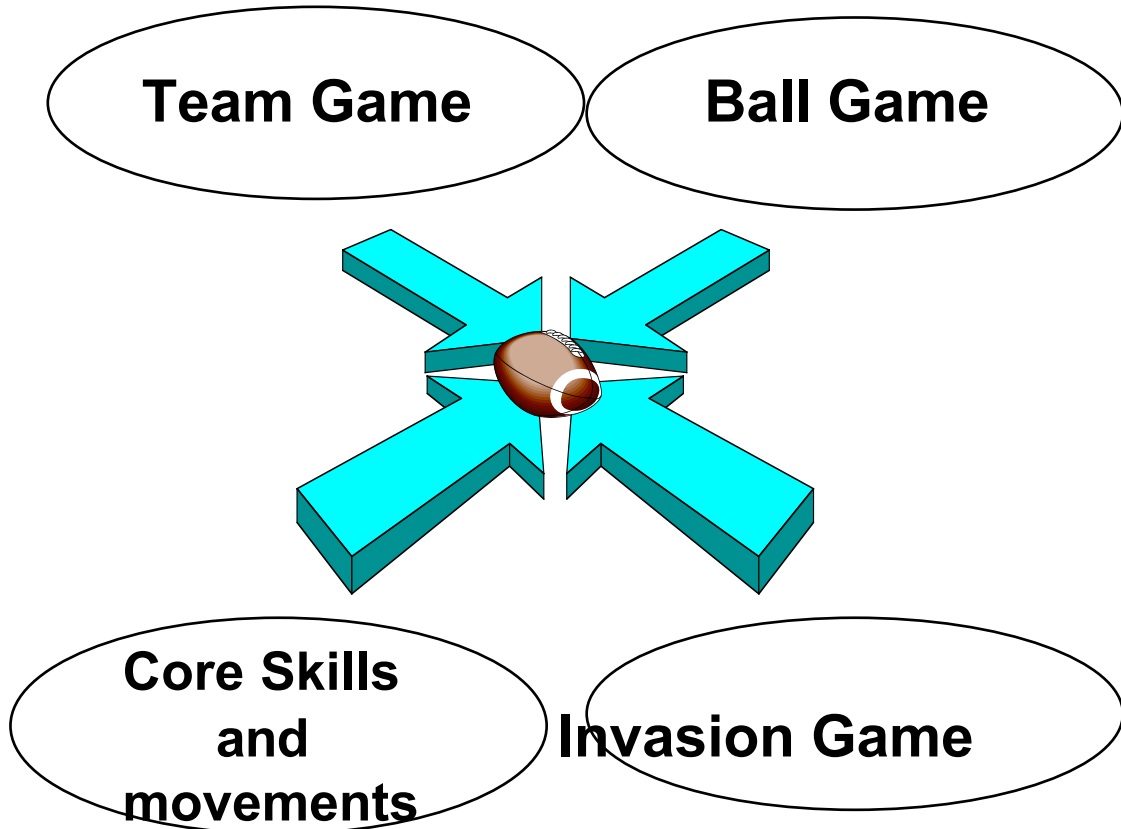
# Playing Can Only Be Learned By Playing

## NFL Flag as a Game

NFL Flag can be included in the group of the group of games known as 'Invasion Games'. As an 'Invasion Game' NFL Flag has shared characteristics with a number of other games including the likes of soccer, rugby, netball and basketball.

Equally, NFL Flag can link with other activity areas for teaching purposes – the similarities between the throw from a Quarterback and that of a Javelin thrower being one notable example.

The combination of both generic sports principles and unique aspects present interesting possibilities for use of NFL Flag in both schools and clubs.

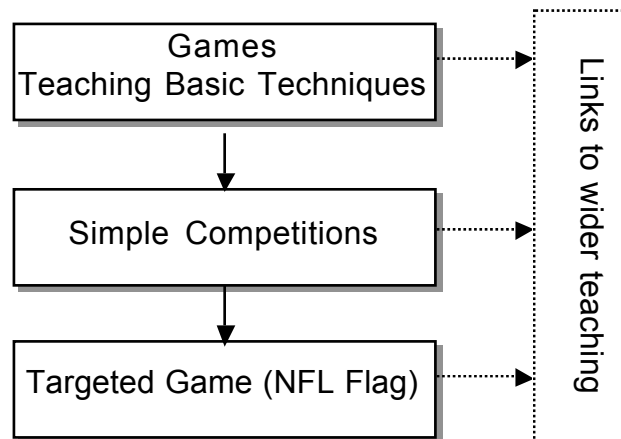




## **Reflections on Methodical Game Progressions in NFL Flag**

Game progressions are in accordance with the basic methodical idea of the drill series and are sequences of game actions with a clear relation to the targeted game.

As teachers, you will be able to utilise these learning experiences to underpin or augment work across a unit or scheme of work.



Games teaching basic techniques contain the characteristic motor skills of the targeted game in a simplified form: passing, receiving and getting open. Forms of the second stage are independent competitions, which contain the concept of the game.

The concept of the game is important in game progressions. Every stage of learning should support the concept of the game but the teacher should also make wider application of many of the skills and principles where appropriate.

The student is granted a lot of freedom of action. Characteristically the types of game should have the same concept but become increasingly more complex and difficult. Therefore, the concept of NFL flag is present from the very beginning.

According to the talent, experience and ability of the students, the methodical game progressions that are based directly on actions and reactions of the targeted game (NFL Flag) should be expanded by methodical drills, which qualitatively develop individual game-related skills (pulling flags, passing, receiving) and specific tactical skills (pass routes, zone defence).

Accordingly, the game progression contains a well-ordered series of competitions that are related to NFL Flag in terms of tactics and techniques. The basic concept of NFL Flag is present in every stage of the game progression. The basic concept, the different techniques and tactics of NFL Flag are taught in game situations.

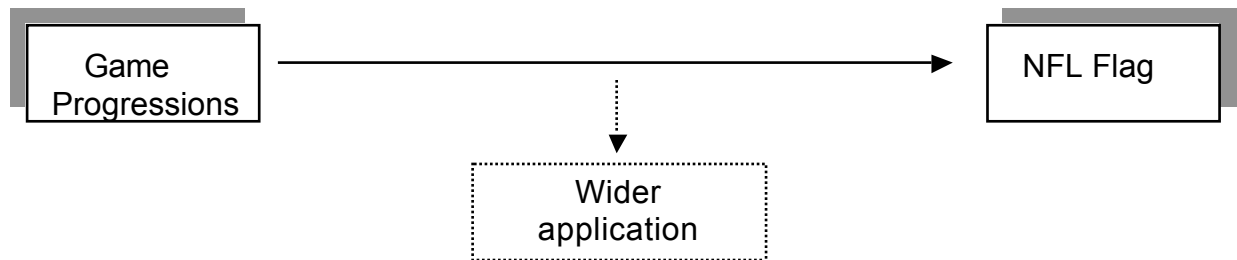




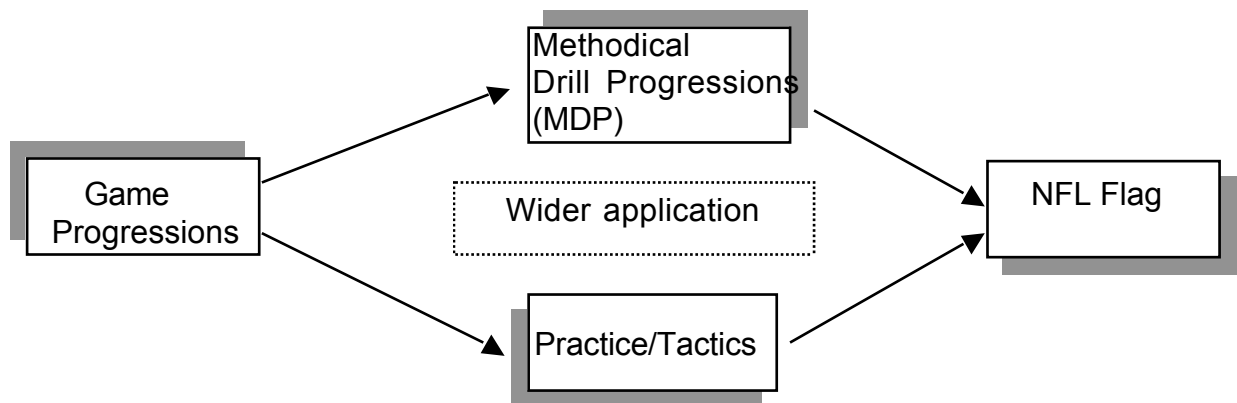
## Concepts of Teaching the Game

The concepts of competition and of transformation have proven themselves effective in practices with beginners, with youth and as segments of practice with advanced athletes.

### Competition concept



### Transformation concept



In these concepts, game progressions function according to the principle of simplification, i.e. the reduction of complex game situations to basic situations and actions, which still retain the basic concept of the game. This ensures that the core situations of NFL Flag are taught from the beginning in manageable settings.

Another element in this form of game progression is the principle of outnumbering the opponent. This means that one team; the offence for example, has more players than the defence. This gives them the advantage and the opportunity to carry out actions (pass, receive) more often and more successfully.

This positive reinforcement of students (learning by success) increases their motivation and their willingness to perfect certain skills in less attractive types of practice (Methodical Drill Progressions, MDP).

Playing a person up gives the weaker students the chance to take part in and contribute to the action. Not only does this give those students the chance to experience success, it also promotes cooperation and team spirit in the group. Techniques, tactics and rules can be introduced to any extent desired parallel to the



game progression and will be understood because of the students' current experience.

MDPs can be composed according to several different standpoints. For example:

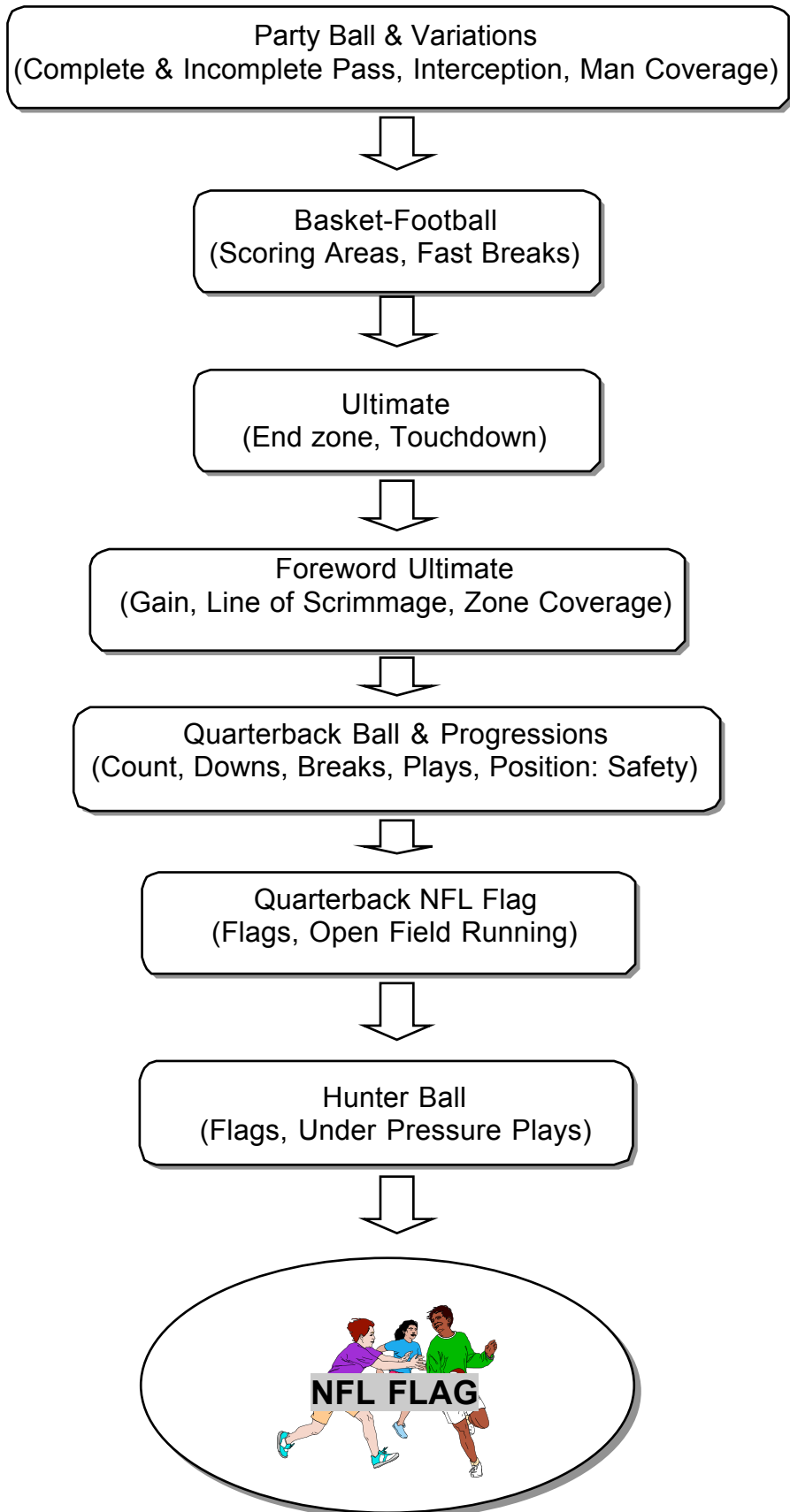
- From small to large teams
- From small to regulation-sized fields
- By gradually changing the equipment (smaller ball > regulation ball, flags)
- From simple to complex rules

If composition of the games in the methodical game progression is to make learning NFL Flag easier, there must be a transfer from one to the other, which supports the learning process. If there are no positive learning transfers, the concept and purpose of the methodical game progression is useless. The individual games make up a methodical game progression only if there is a pedagogical relationship between them.

## **Types of Competition**

The competitions should feature simple organization and brief preparation. They should be flexible to meet requirements of space, time and equipment. Rules should be easily modifiable to fit the performance level and wishes of the players as well as fulfil the requirements of the teacher.

One final feature should be pointed out: the competitions should have simple, easily understood basic ideas which allow the students to start playing quickly with a minimum of time-consuming explanations. This very much accommodates the spontaneous desire for action common to beginners, children and youth.





## Party Ball (Ten Count)

**Concept:** Team A ○ tries to maintain possession by passing and catching the ball.  
Team B ● tries to prevent Team A from completing passes by intercepting or batting the ball away.

**Rules:** The player in possession of the ball may not be prevented from passing.

However, he may not run with the ball.

No contact!

Only a pass, which has been caught (complete pass) guarantees possession.

Should the ball hit the ground, possession changes immediately to the other team (No fumble).

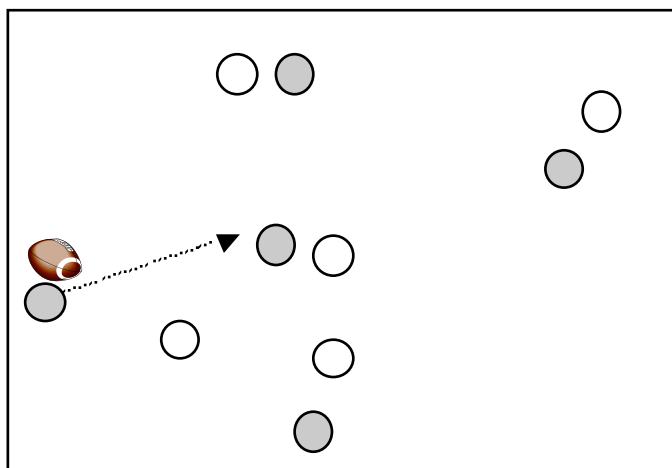
**Tip:** 1on 1 situation. Each player has a direct opponent.

**Tip:** Give one point to the team in which each player has caught the ball once and thrown a complete pass. (This promotes a feeling of team responsibility.)

**Tip:** To promote the integration of girls, the teacher could award two points instead of one to teams in which girls catch the ball and throw a complete pass. This makes passing to them more interesting.

**Note:** This introduces passing and receiving and getting free, 1 on 1 situations, and having one player more in the defence with teams of the same size.

**Diagram:**





## Party Ball with Joker

Concept: Integrating new students in the game.

Rules: Every second pass must be thrown to the joker.  
The joker may run with the ball.  
The joker is always on the team in possession of the ball.

Tip: Substitute the joker frequently.  
Play with 2 jokers.

Tip: Give each player a number  $\Rightarrow$  and throw to them in numerical order  
(1>2>3>4>5)

Note: The joker remains in motion constantly, trying to get free. Frequent ball contacts challenge both the superior and inferior players. The teacher may decide whether a more skilled or less skilled student should be the joker.

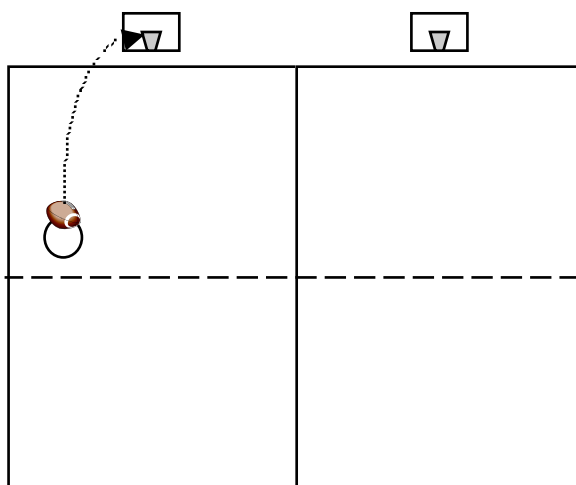
## Basket- Football

Concept: Most of the students are already familiar with basketball, which enables them to adapt quickly to this variation. Basket-Football introduces the 5 on 5 situation and scoring points at the ends of the field.  
The rules are the same as Party Ball; but points are now scored only at the basket.

Scoring:	Hitting the backboard	1 Point
	Hitting the rim or net	2 Points
	Hitting the metal rim plate	3 Points
	Making a basket	5 Points

Rules: After the ball is thrown at the basket, possession is awarded to the team, which was defending (no rebounds).  
Only after crossing mid-court may a team throw at the basket.

Diagram:





Tip: Every player must be thrown to at least once. 1 on 1 situation.

Note: Shifting axis of the game toward the end zones (as in NFL Flag).  
5 on 5 (as in NFL Flag).

Limiting passes at the basket to the offensive half of the court promotes the short passing game. Long passes are kept to a minimum; and all players are integrated. This limitation keeps the game from becoming a series of long passes from one end to the other over the heads of most of the players.

### Party Ball with End Zone: Ultimate

Concept: Similar to Party Ball, but the Football must be passed into the opponent's end zone where a team mate and can catch the ball (Touchdown).

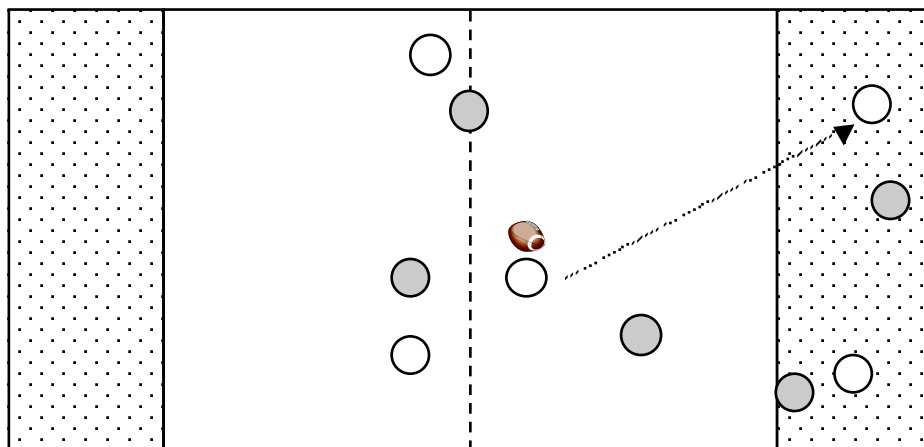
Rules: The basic rules are the same as Party Ball. The football may be thrown in any direction.

Tip: Every player must catch at least one pass and throw once.  
Passes into the opponent's end zone may be attempted only after a team has crossed the 1<sup>st</sup> down midfield line.

Tip: Making the end zones overly large in proportion to the rest of the playing field allows teams to score many points, which is highly motivating.

Note: The concept and importance of the "End zone" (which is typical for football) is introduced. Points (Touchdown) may only be scored in the end zone.

Diagram:





## Forward – Ultimate

**Concept:** Similar to Party Ball, but the football must be passed forward into the opponent's end zone where it may be caught by a team mate (Touchdown).

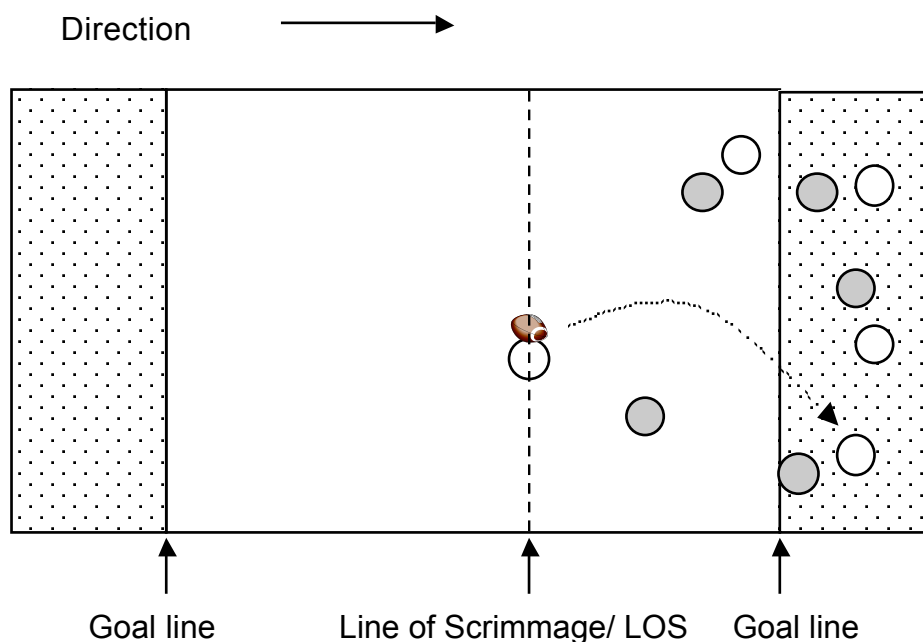
**Rules:** The basic rules are the same as in Ultimate. However, the football may only be thrown forward (Gaining ground). If the ball hits the ground, the opposing team is awarded possession and starts on its own goal line (End zone line).

If a pass is caught by the defence (Interception), the team making the interception is awarded possession and starts on its own goal line (End zone line).

**Tip:** The player with the ball must wait until all his teammates are in front of him before he throws the ball.

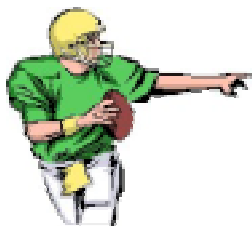
**Note:** This introduces gaining ground. By catching passes, a team shifts the centre of action toward the opponent's end zone. The line of scrimmage is moved forward. The field between the LOS and end zone becomes smaller and smaller. The defence has a smaller area to defend; it can employ a man-to-man defence (Man Coverage) or zone defence (Zone Coverage). Thus the tactical element of zone coverage can be introduced.

**Diagram:**





## Quarterback Ball



**Concept:** All offensive players line up on the line of scrimmage (LOS). When the QB gives the count they run towards the opponent's goal line and try to get free and catch the ball.

When a player catches the ball, he/she becomes QB; the next play starts from this point.

The concept of the fluid game is replaced by the concept of starting the play by the QB's count. Breaks between plays are introduced.

**Rules:** The basic rules are the same as Ultimate. However, the football may now only be thrown forward (Gaining ground). Each QB has 2 - 4 attempts (Downs) to pass the ball to his teammates.

The offensive players may not move from the line of scrimmage until the QB has given the count ("Set Go"). Offensive players are free to choose the pass route and get open.

A player who catches a pass becomes the QB and has 2 – 4 attempts (Downs) from the point of the catch to pass the ball to his teammates.

The QB may not be pressured (Blitzed) by the defence. However, they may not run forward over the LOS with the ball. S/he is allowed to run parallel to the LOS on his side to create holes in the defence.

If the defence intercepts a pass, it is awarded possession of the ball on its own goal line.

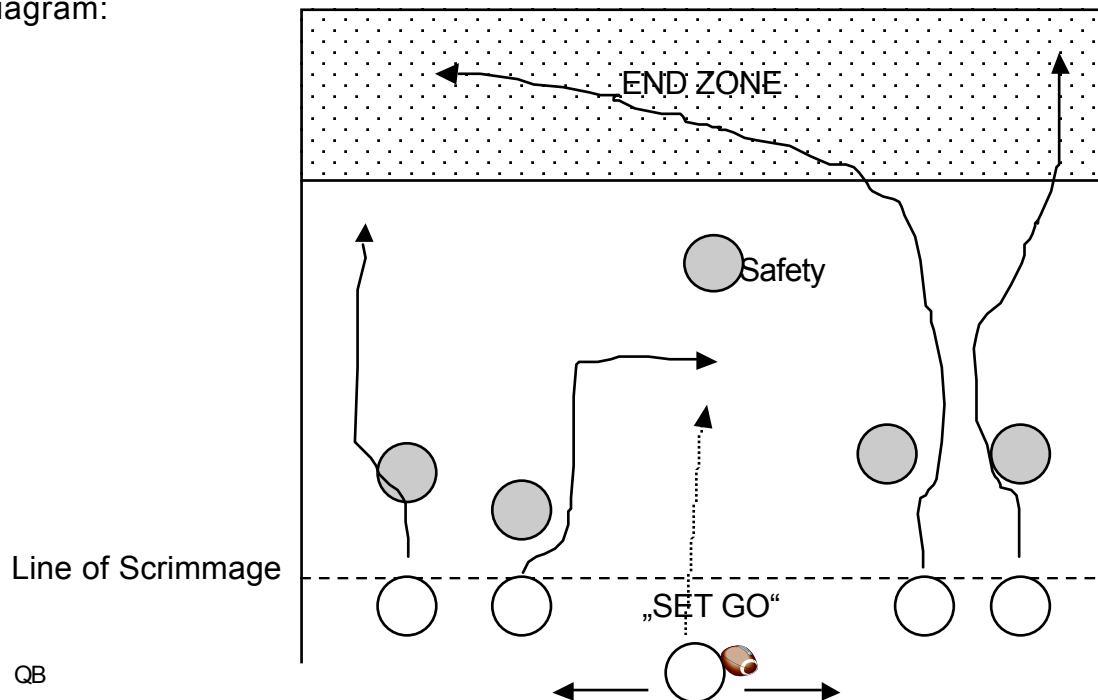
**Note:** This game introduces the offensive snap count, downs, breaks between plays and gaining ground. Because the QB may not run over the LOS with the ball, the defence automatically outnumbers the offence. This introduces the free / last man in the defence (safety).

**Tip:** Short passes are more successful than long passes. By completing short passes, the offence both gains ground and gets 2 – 4 further attempts (Downs). The number of downs should be adjusted to the size of the field, number of players, etc but should not exceed 4. A further benefit is that the more first downs a team gets, the greater the number of players becomes the QB.





Diagram:



## Quarterback NFL Flag

**Concept:** This is like Quarterback Ball except that all the players now wear flag belts. The play is over when the ball carrier's flag is pulled from his belt (tackling). The player who was just tackled becomes the QB with the ball snapped from this spot.

**Rules:** If the defence catches a pass by the offence (Interception), it may run with the ball towards the opponent's end zone (interception return). If the defender with the ball reaches the opponent's end zone, the defence scores a touchdown (Interception Touchdown). The defence may pressure the QB by a blitz. Player(s) who blitz must be lined up in a position 7 yards from the line of scrimmage at the snap and may not start to blitz until the QB gives the snap count. The QB may evade the blitz only by running sideways or backwards; he may not cross the line of scrimmage.

**Tip:** Blitzes should not be employed too often in the early stages so that the offence can establish a rhythm. If a QB is very inexperienced or not very talented, the teacher can forbid the blitz altogether.

**Note:** This introduces pulling the flag (Tackling), running with the ball (Open Field Running), returning intercepted passes (Interception Return), scoring points for the defence (Interception Touchdown), pressuring the quarterback (Blitz) and the quarterback's eluding the blitz (Quarterback Scramble).



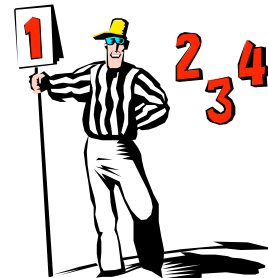
## Hunter Ball

**Concept:** Designate a player from the group as the “Hunter.” To make him recognizable, he wears a coloured vest or an armband. The rest of the players are „Hares” who run around in the open field while the “Hunter” tries to pull their flags.  
A “Hare” whose flag has been pulled becomes the “Hunter.”  
To protect themselves, the „Hares,” should pass the football back and forth. While in possession of the football, a “Hare” is “safe” and may not have his flag pulled. With the ball, a “Hare” can run anywhere in the open field s/he chooses.

**Rules:** A “Hare” is safe from the “Hunter” only when carrying a ball. If a pass is incomplete, the player who threw the pass then becomes the “Hunter.” If a “Hare” steps out of bounds, s/he becomes the “Hunter.”

**Tip:** Give the “Hares” a second football.

**Note:** This game sharpens the skills and techniques of flag pulling. Players learn to recognize when a team-mate is under pressure and learn to pass the ball under pressure. Likewise, they learn to catch the ball under pressure and get free of a defender, the “Hunter.”



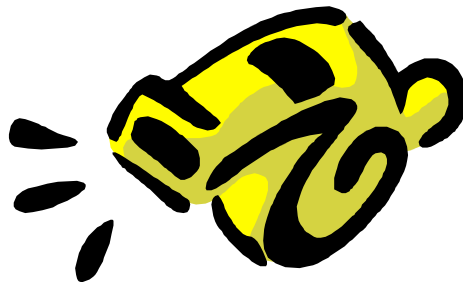
### A Bit about Rules

*Rules are necessary when the students act contrary to the concept of the game or when their actions prevent the game from being played properly. The necessary rules can be decided by simple observation. If the teacher notices disturbances / an interference in the game, they should discuss this with the students to clarify and agree on which rules should be introduced. This way rules keep pace with what is happening on the field; and the students consider them an integral part of the game. Rules form the basic vocabulary for communication about the game. The motto should be: “As few rules as possible, as many as necessary.”*



## The NFL Flag No Nos ☹

- ☹ Guarding your flag ☹
- ☹ Diving except for the football ☹
- ☹ Running into another player ☹
- ☹ Tackling ☹
- ☹ Illegal contact ☹
- ☹ Rough play ☹
- ☹ Tripping ☹
- ☹ Using insulting or foul language ☹
- ☹ Making fun of another player ☹
- ☹ Hitting or elbowing ☹
- ☹ Blocking ☹
- ☹ Attacking an opponent from behind ☹
- ☹ Batting the ball from QB's hand during a pass ☹
- ☹ Holding ☹
- ☹ Not allowing someone to play ☹





## **Pulling the Flag**

The players must be taught to stop the offence by pulling the ball carrier's flag. This is stimulative because of the natural hunter's sense everyone has.

A defender has the best chance when they get as close as possible to there opponent so they can pull the flags with both hands. To have a good defence, the individual defenders must be able to pull flags (tackle) well. If you wish to have a good defence, you must teach your players how to pull flags. Here are several points the students should keep in mind:

- 🏈 Do not overreact. Force the ball carrier to make a move.
- 🏈 Get into a "football position" - feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent
- 🏈 Put the weight on the balls of your feet.
- 🏈 Keep your eyes on the flag (from the side) or on the belly button (from the front)
- 🏈 Extend your arms in front of your body.
- 🏈 Keep your head up. Do not look at the ground.
- 🏈 Focus on the flag until you pull it.
- 🏈 Do not cramp your arms when pulling the flag.
- 🏈 Keep your body under control (Balance) to react in any direction.
- 🏈 After pulling the flag, remain at the spot and hold it in the air for the referees to see.
- 🏈 Then return the flag to your opponent. Fair play.



## Simple Games and Drills to Teach Flag Pulling

### **Jailbreak**

Name: Jailbreak

Necessary Equipment: Flag belt

Purpose: To teach flag pulling in the open field

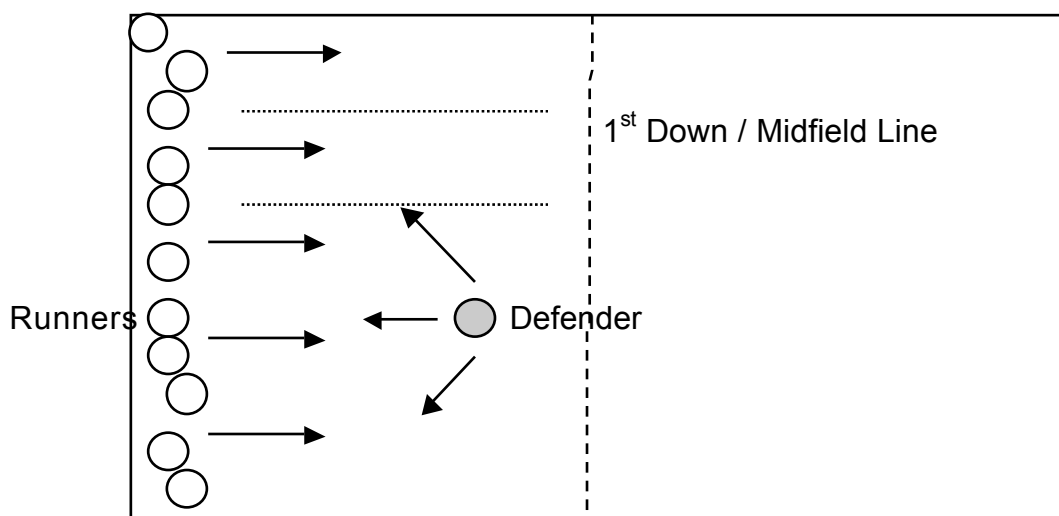


Organization: The runners line up at the end of the field and to reach the 1<sup>st</sup> down / midfield line. The defender lines up in the middle of the field and tries to prevent the runners from reaching the midfield line by pulling at least one flag from each runner. Every runner who has a flag pulled becomes a defender. The last runner left becomes the first defender in the next round.

Coaching Points: Make sure that runners try to elude the defender(s). Runners may not guard their flags. Blocking is not allowed.

Safety points: Runners must stay within their “corridors” which should be 3-5 meters wide. This keeps players from running laterally over the field and colliding blindside with other players.

Diagram:



Variations: Depending on the size of the field or gymnasium, the players can run the length or with width of the field, giving the runners more room or less room.



## Shotgun Drill

Name: Shotgun Drill

Necessary Equipment: Flag belt, 2 markers, a line, and one ball for each offensive player, if possible (but not necessary)

Purpose: To teach pulling flags rapidly in a tight area.

Organization: The defender is positioned on a line between the two markers that are 3 meters apart.

The offensive players line up closely to one another 5 meters away. On the count, they run one after another and try to cross the line between the markers without losing a flag.

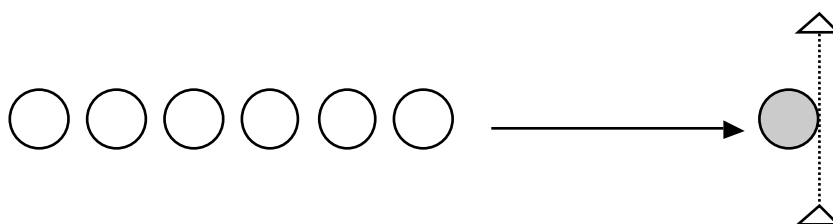
The defender stays on the line (holds his ground) and tries to pull as many flags as possible.

Coaching Points: At first the offensive players should run rather slowly through the markers. As flag pulling skills develop, the tempo may be increased.

Coaching Points: When an offensive player runs to the right of the defender (from his point of view), the defender takes a step with his *right* foot toward the opponent and reaches for the flag with his *right* hand (slide & pull). If the offensive player runs to the defender's left, the defender repeats the process with his *left* foot and *left* hand.

Safety points: An offensive player may not run over or through the defender. Offensive players should run one after the other rather quickly but should keep enough distance to avoid collisions. They must not guard their flags.

Diagram:





## End zone Run

Name: End zone Run

Necessary Equipment: Flag belt, 4 markers per station and, if possible, a line as end zone line (Goal line). One ball per offensive player.

Purpose: To teach pulling the flag in 1 on 1 situations.

Organization: An offensive player is lined up in one corner of an 8 x 6 meter box. The defender is lined up in the diagonally opposite corner. The teacher throws the ball to the offensive player who catches it and tries run into the end zone without losing a flag. S/he must stay within the boundaries of the box.

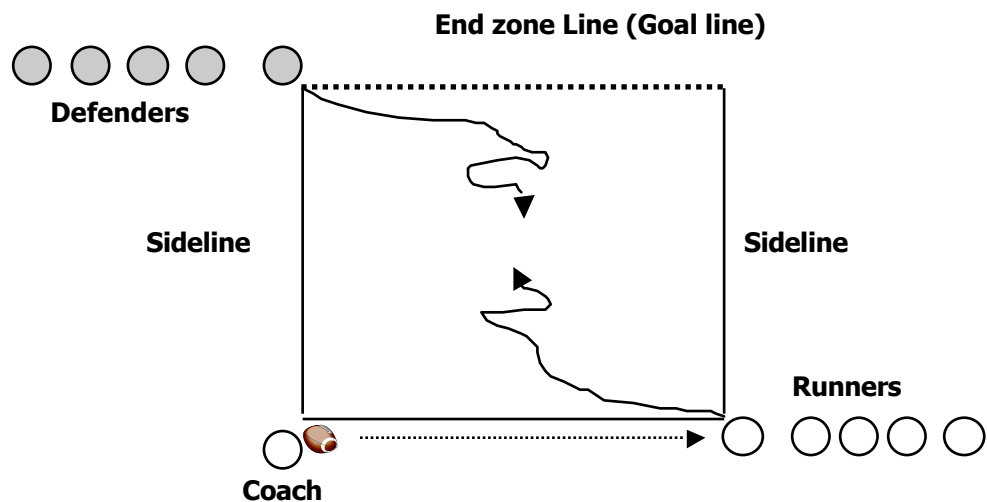


The defender may not move until the offensive player catches the ball. The drill is over when the offensive player reaches the end zone (Touchdown), runs out of bounds or when they lose their flag.

Coaching Points: Make sure the offensive player tries to elude the defender. The defender should not overreact. They should remain parallel to and in front of their opponent and keep his eyes on his opponent's hips.

Safety points: The players waiting in line should make sure to stand well away from the sidelines to avoid collisions.

Diagram:



Variation: Make the box wider and force the defender to protect a larger area. In this case the defender should be positioned in the middle of his end zone line. This allows them to get to their opponent quickly.



Variation: Position one extra defender on each sideline. They may not enter the box but may pull the opponent's flag if s/he runs close to the sideline.

### Go for Touchdown

Name: Go for Touchdown

Necessary Equipment: Flag belt, several balls, and, if possible, boundary lines

PURPOSE: To teach players to run with the ball and to fake out defenders trying to pull their flags.

Depending on the variation of the drill, to teach defenders to pull flags in a 1 on 1 situation or to defended their specific zones.

Organization: Ball carriers line up in the end zone; one defender lines up in each zone. The number of zones may vary according to the size of the field / gymnasium.

One after the other, the ball carriers try to get past the defenders and into the end zone (Touchdown) without losing a flag.

Defenders try to stop the ball carriers by pulling their flags. They may do this only in their own zones.

If a ball carrier goes out of bounds or loses a flag, s/he has to wait until the next round to run again.

Coaching Points: Ball carriers may not guard their flags. Make sure that they elude the defenders.

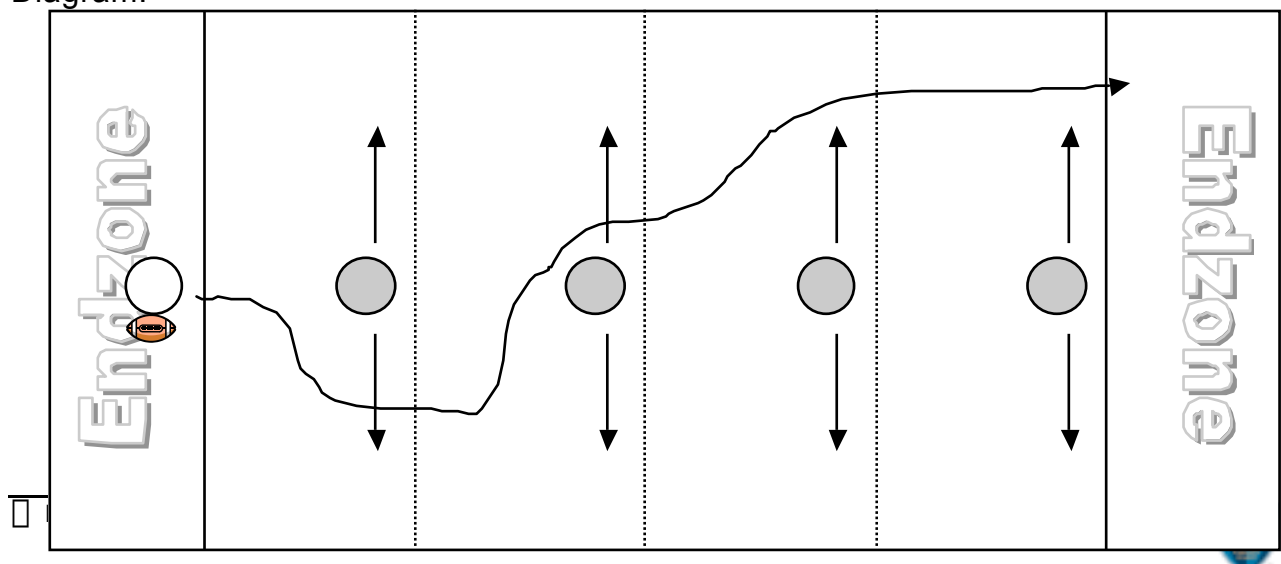
Safety points: Do not let ball carriers start too rapidly in succession.

Variation: Divide the field / gymnasium in half lengthwise and create two drill areas.

Variation: The defenders may only move along the lines, keeping their shoulders parallel to the lines and squared up toward the ball carrier.

Variation: Team Game: The game is over when the defenders have pulled the flags of a specified number of ball carriers, e.g. 3.

Diagram:









## **Receiving Techniques**

Receivers use different techniques for catching high passes and low passes.

**High passes:** To catch a ball approaching at chest height or higher, the receiver faces the ball and partially extends their arms in front of the body. S/he holds their hands with palms facing the ball. Their thumbs and index fingers form a circle. The other fingers of both hands form a basket.

**Low passes:** To catch balls approaching below chest level, the receiver faces the ball and puts his palms toward the ball with the fingers pointing toward the ground. The little fingers point toward (and can even touch) each other. The thumbs point out. (Note: Modified slightly, this technique is also used to catch long passes - fly, corner, post - which approach the receiver from behind and over the shoulder.)

It is important that the receiver's hands be "soft" and relaxed to help him catch the ball easily.

Correct receiving technique features not only the correct hand position, but that the receiver "looks the ball into his hands." That is he keeps his eyes on the ball until he has caught and secured it.

A good receiver must always register the following information:  
the path of the ball,  
the position of one's body to the ball,  
the location on the field and  
movements of opponents and team-mates.

But the focus of attention changes.

For example, before the ball is thrown, the player's attention is focused on the opponent's actions. Right after the ball is thrown, the student must focus their attention on the flight of the ball and the opponent often disappears from their field of vision.

It is not possible to receive detailed information about the defenders' movements and, at the same time, observe the path of the ball. Still, many students try the impossible and move their heads, and eyes, away from the ball, either before or while they try to catch it.

Sudden movements of the head cause successive reflexive movements in the spine and extremities. This influences the movement of the hands and arms; and the student cannot hold on to the ball.

To prevent these reflex movements, the student should keep his eyes on the ball until s/he catches and secures it. They should fix their attention on a part of the ball, such as the forward tip or the white stripe. An old football saying is "Look the ball into your hands!"





## Receiving Drills

Name: Easy Ups

Necessary Equipment: Footballs, cartons for footballs

Purpose: To teach catching balls while running

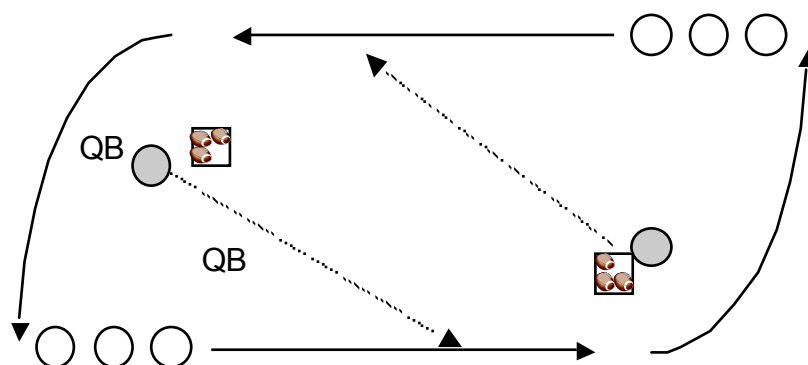
Organization: On the QB's count, the receiver runs straight downfield and tries to catch the ball. After catching the ball, they place it in the carton near the other QB and takes their place in that line. (Rotation).

Coaching Points: The receiver should turn their head body only enough to be able see the ball in flight. Their eyes should remain on the ball until s/he catches and secures it. S/he should try to catch the ball with his fingertips or in the "basket" (see low ball technique above). The receiver should keep their little fingers and elbows together in the "basket."

Safety points: After a receiver has caught a ball, they should put it in the carton near the QB. This keeps balls from rolling around on the ground where players can trip over them. If a pass is not caught, the QB should wait until that receiver collects the ball and leaves the receiving area before throwing another pass.

Variations: Run from the left or right of the QB.  
Let one student be the quarterback for the whole round.  
Change QB's after every pass.  
Vary the pass routes.

Diagram:



Variation: A defender passively shadows the route ("Fly" – Pass route) the receiver runs but does not attack them.  
Make sure the QB does not throw the ball until s/he has made eye contact with the receiver.



## **Reflections on Methodical Drill Progressions in NFL Flag**

Methodical Drill Progressions (MDP) are sequences of drills ordered according to methodical principles, which should lead to the learning of a specific motor skill (in this case, throwing a football).

The consecutive addition of increasingly complex and difficult drills, which result in a combination of motions, is a reliable process in the athletic training of NFL Flag.

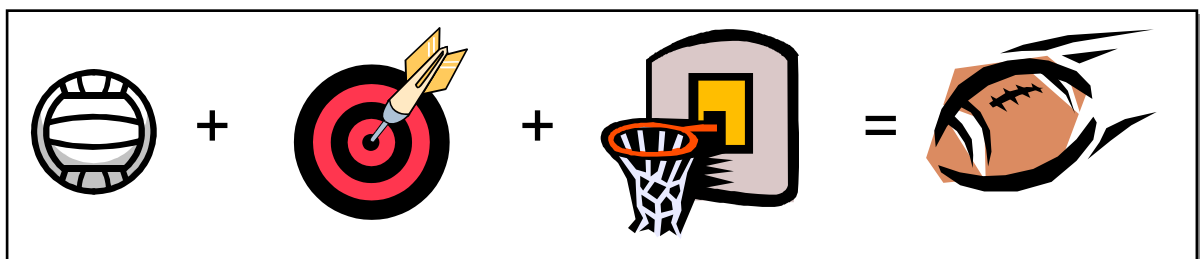
The drills series are composed from the standpoint of the relation of movements to those of the targeted drill (e.g. throwing the football). A MDP contributes to the overall effectiveness and increases player safety.

The effectiveness of a MDP increases when the players understand the connection between the targeted drill and the drill series. Learning and practicing skills should not be done for its own sake but with a clearly defined and delineated targeted drill in mind. MDPs should not be conducted for longer periods of time as the players may lose focus.

## **Methodical Drill Progressions for Passing**

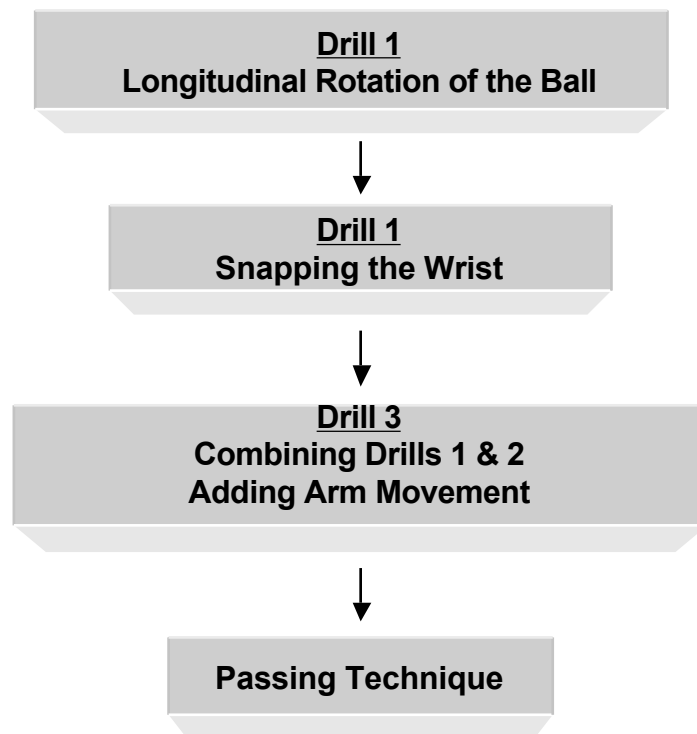
Since NFL Flag is not established in the framework of European schools, it is assumed that students will have become familiar with the overhand throw technique from track and field and team sports such as handball, before they have learned American football.

The passing motion in football is an overhand throwing motion with the simultaneous rotation of the wrist. Therefore it is familiar to most students. A further point is the rotation of the football around its longitudinal axis. This movement of the ball is similar to shooting a set shot in basketball. There is also a similar principle in darts. The dart is mostly thrown with a spin or rotation around its longitudinal axis.





The following Methodical Drill Progressions for learning to throw the football has been derived from the above basics:



### **Drill # 1: Longitudinal Rotation of the Ball**

Necessary Equipment: One ball for every 2 players

Purpose: Teach the student to roll the ball over their fingertips, thereby giving it longitudinal rotation.

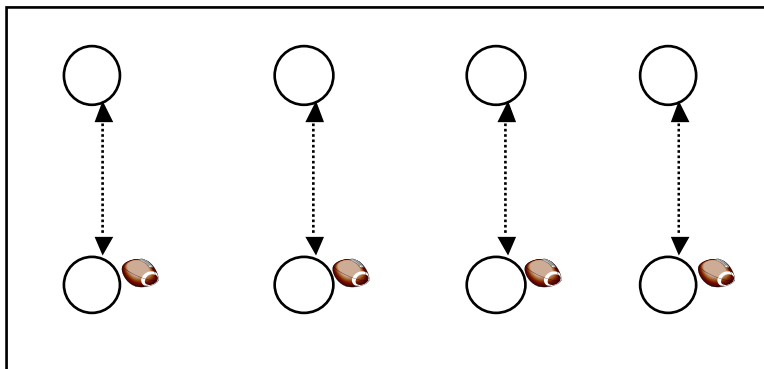
Organization: Two players stand 3-6 meters apart facing each other. The football is thrown with an underarm motion.

Coaching Points: The throwing arm is held downward. The palm of the open throwing hand faces up; the thumb points outward. One tip of the football protrudes between thumb and index finger. The other fingertips grasp the ball. The hand is rotated outwards, rolling the ball on the fingertips. The fingertips and thumb now both point away from the body. The forward point of the ball now points in the direction of the target. Using an underarm motion, the student throws to their partner.

Safety points: The distance between the students should not be increased until they have mastered the basic technique. The ball should not be thrown hard as this makes the pass inaccurate and hard to catch.



Diagram:



## Drill # 2: Snapping the Wrist

Necessary Equipment: One ball for every two players

Purpose: To teach the passer to snap their wrist while rotating it simultaneously. Partial throwing motion.

Organization: Two players stand 3 - 6 meters apart facing each other. Passes should be lobbed.

Coaching Points: The football is grasped in the middle with the fingertips on the laces. The throwing arm is held over the head with the elbow held immobile by the other hand. The wrist is cocked to the rear, then is straightened quickly; and in the last stage, it is pushed down. The fingers give the football a spin. This motion is similar to the “Cobra” in basketball. After the football has left the hand, the player’s body should be straight; the passing arm is up and slightly forward. The fingers should be pointing forward and the thumb downwards. The pass should be thrown in a high trajectory.

Safety points: Same as Drill # 1

Diagram: See Drill # 1



### **Drill # 3: Combining Drills 1 & 2 plus Arm Motion**

Necessary Equipment: One ball for every two players.

Purpose: To reach the target drill [technique] by introducing the overhand throwing motion in combination with rotating the football around its longitudinal axis, snapping the wrist and the proper grip.

Organization: Organization as in Drill # 1. The football is thrown from partner to partner.

Coaching Points: Holding the football:

There are two main techniques for gripping a football: the 1&4 and 2&5 techniques. In the 1&4 techniques, the ring finger of the throwing hand is on the first loop of the laces and the little finger on the fourth loop. In the 2&5 techniques, the fingers are placed on the 2nd and 5th loops. The ball is held only in the fingertips. Beginners should try to hold the ball in the middle if possible so as to control it better.



Overhand Throwing Motion / Motion of the Throwing Arm:

Wind up bringing the shoulder and arm upwards to the rear. The elbow remains at shoulder height; hips and shoulders are perpendicular to one another. Uncoil and reverse the wind up action by bringing the hips forward followed by the shoulder movement and simultaneous sudden straightening of the arm. The reversal of the wind up action is started by planting the front leg. The forward tip of the ball, points in the direction of the target.

Safety points: Especially in the beginning the passes are very inaccurate. Therefore, make sure there is sufficient distance between players to avoid collisions. Otherwise, see Drill # 1.

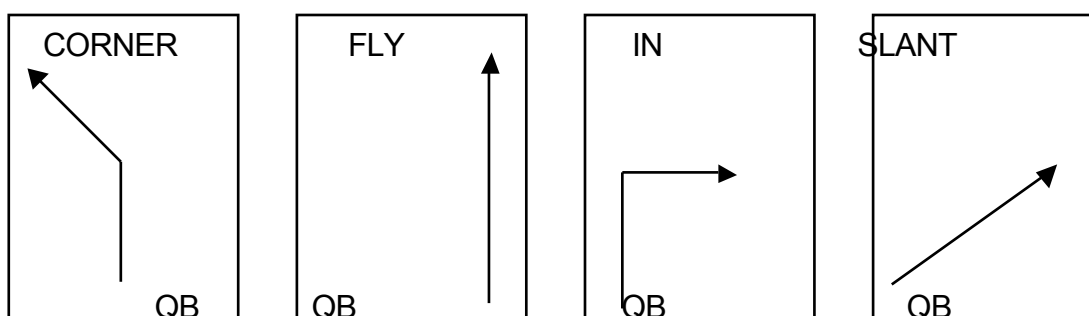
Diagram: See Drill # 1.



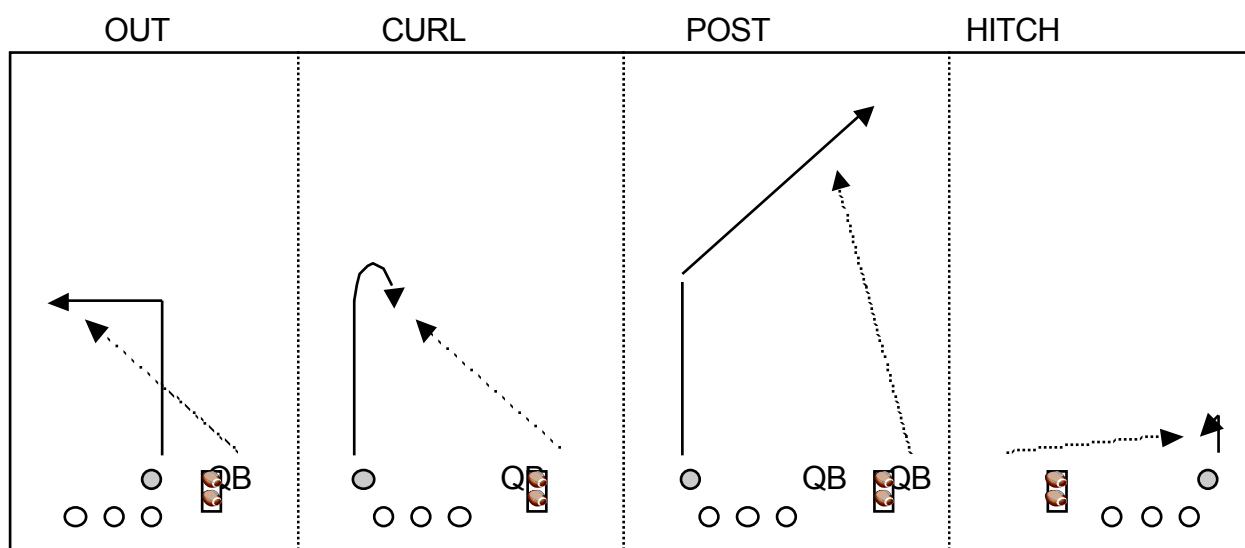
## Drills to Learn Pass Routes

This set of drills introduces the various pass routes while simultaneously improving and reinforcing receiving and passing skills. The group should be divided into four subgroups. Each of these is assigned a specific pass route, which is drawn on a card. One player is designated as QB and, depending on the route, stands to the left or right of the group. The QB gives the snap count („SET-GO“) giving the receiver the signal to start on the designated pass route. The QB can be changed at any time. After each player has run the route several times, the group changes stations. At the end of the drill, each group should have gone through every station several times.

Possible layouts for pass route cards:



Examples of line-ups in larger gymnasiums / on larger fields:



Safety points:

After a receiver has caught a ball, he should put it in the carton near the QB. This keeps balls from rolling around on the ground where players can trip over them. If a pass is not caught, the QB should wait until that receiver collects the ball and leaves the receiving area before throwing another pass. The stations should be positioned so that there is no overlapping of routes or that passes are thrown into other stations.





## MDP to Develop Technical and Tactical Offensive Skills

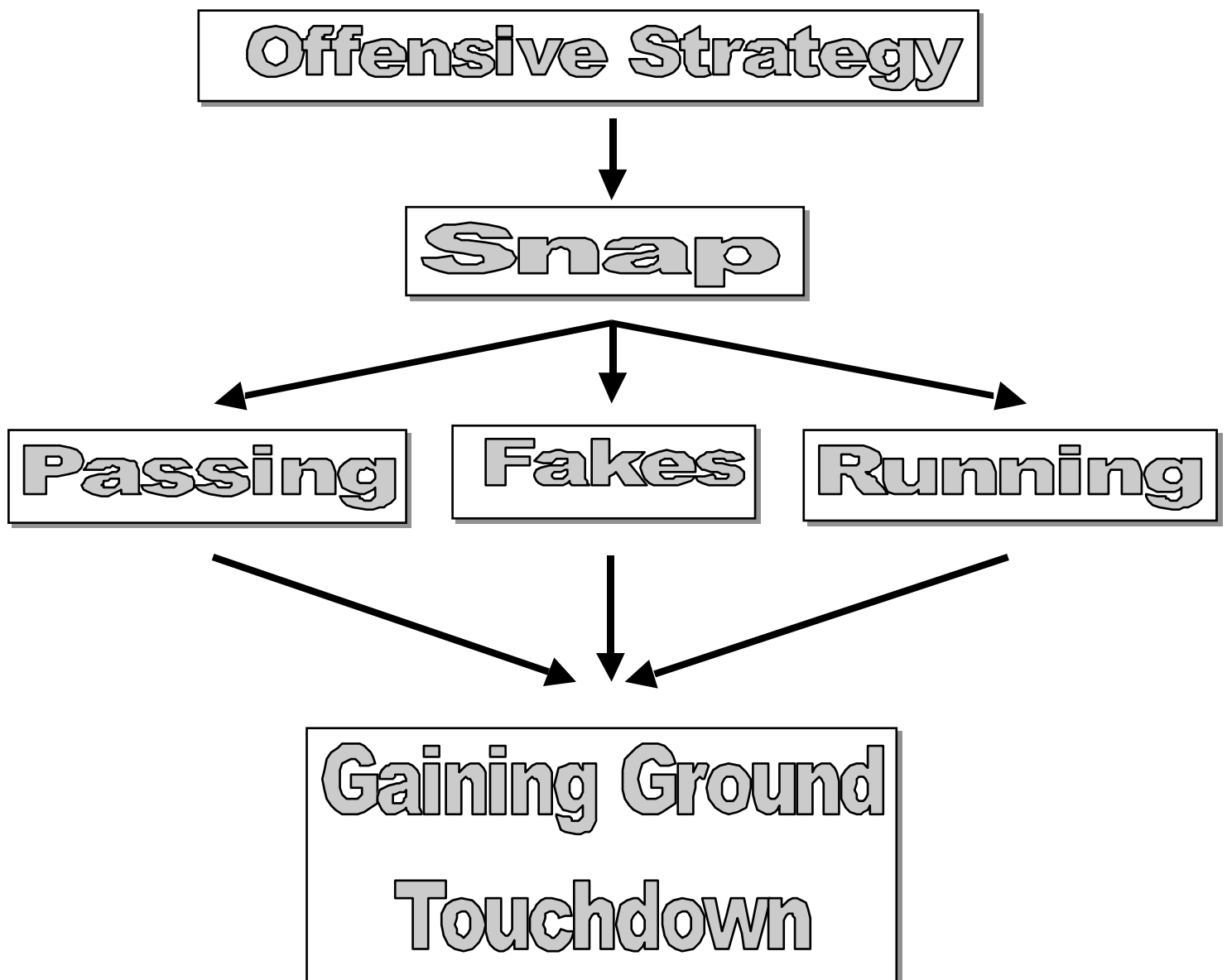
To realize offensive strategies in NFL Flag, certain skills must be developed.

Starting the play: Passing the ball from centre to quarterback – “Snap”

Passing: The pass from quarterback to centre - “Passing”

Running: Transferring the ball from quarterback to ball carrier (Running Back) by a handoff - “Running”

Combination running and passing:  
Faking a handoff to the ball carrier and passing to a WR - “Fake”





## Drill # 1: Snap from Centre to Quarterback

Necessary Equipment: 1 football for 3 players

Purpose: To develop the snap. This is the pass through the centre's legs back to the quarterback. Every play in NFL Flag starts with the snap.

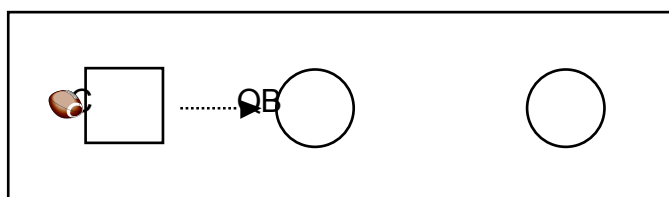
Organization: The centre stands with their back to the quarterback about one meter away. The football is placed on the ground in front of the centre. The centre straddles their legs and grasps the football using the passing grip.

On the count, the centre snaps the ball to the quarterback. Then the students rotate: the quarterback becomes centre; and the third player becomes quarterback and the centre waits to the side (Rotation).

Coaching Points: The centre snaps the ball to the quarterback on the count. The quarterback should have their arms extended toward the centre before the count. This keeps the QB from being unprepared for the snap. The centre should aim at the QB's upper body.

Safety points: The ball should not be snapped until all players are set and ready. This prevents players from being hit in the face by the ball.

Diagram:



## Drill # 2: Pass from quarterback to centre after the snap

Necessary Equipment: 1 football for 3 players

Purpose: Combine snaps and passing

Organization: After snapping to the quarterback, the centre runs a curl route and catches the pass. The students rotate: the quarterback becomes centre, the third player becomes quarterback and the centre waits to the side (Rotation).

Coaching Points: The quarterback does not pass until the centre has run to the proper place and looked at them. Make sure the players employ proper passing and receiving techniques.

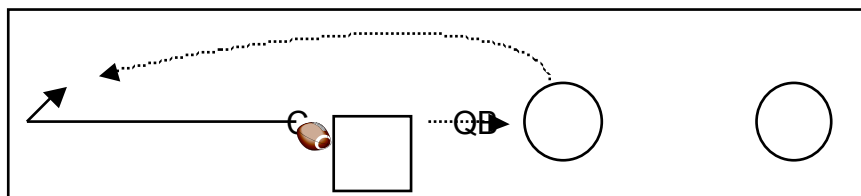
Tip: A good pass is not necessarily one which is hard and fast, but the one which is completed. Consider the quarterback and receiver as a single unit.



Tip: When the receiver is ready to catch ball, they can give a hand signal.

Safety points: The quarterback should not pass until s/he has established eye contact with the receiver.

Diagram:



### Drill # 3: Hand Off from Quarterback to Running Back after the Snap

Necessary Equipment: 1 football for 3 players

Purpose: Combine snaps and running

Organization: A ball carrier (Running Back) is introduced. The centre, quarterback and running back are lined up directly behind one another. The QB should be 1 meter behind the centre; the RB 2 meters behind the QB. On the quarterback's count ("SET GO") the centre snaps the ball to the QB.

The running back starts when the count is given and, depending on the play, runs past the quarterback on the left or right. After the quarterback has caught the snap, s/he gives it to the running back (Handoff). Then the running back runs forward with the ball.

Coaching Points: The handoff is very important for the running game. When handing the ball off to the running back, the quarterback places the ball into the RB's arms and presses it against the RB's stomach. The RB must make sure to hold their arms in proper position for the handoff. Just before the handoff, s/he places his forearms at chest and waist level one above the other, forming a "Pocket." If s/he runs past the QB on the left (QB on their left), the RB's *right* forearm is on the top and *left* forearm on the bottom. The hands grip the tips of the ball. If s/he runs past the QB on the right (QB on his right) the RB's *left* forearm is on the top and *right* forearm on the bottom. The hands grip the tips of the ball. This prevents the RB's elbow from hitting the QB's arm and causing a fumble.

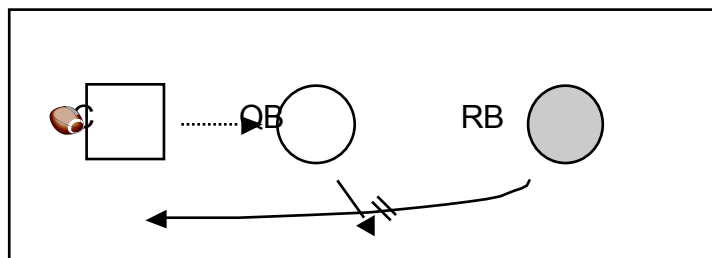
When the quarterback has placed the ball in the pocket, the RB must immediately grab the tips of the ball, clamp their forearms and secure the ball. Forming the pocket properly and making the handoff must be practiced frequently as this is a critical action. A mistake here can lead to a fumble and loss of the ball.



Tip: Practice handoffs from both sides.

Tip: The ball carrier should always try to carry the ball in their outside arm (the arm closest to the sideline), keeping it away from the defender who always tries to knock the ball loose.

Diagram:



#### Drill # 4: Faking a Run and Passing to the Centre

Necessary Equipment: 1 football for 3 players

Purpose: Combine running and passing

Organization: Like Drill # 3, except that the QB fakes the hand off to the RB. After the fake, the QB passes to the centre. The centre runs a pass route after snapping the ball (e.g. An “Out”).

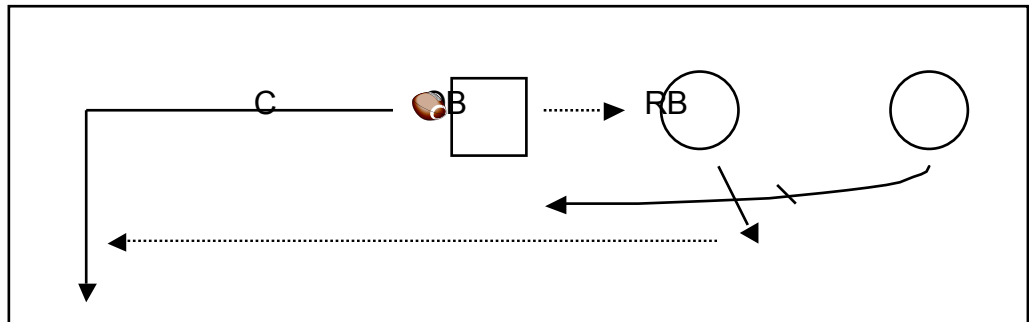
Coaching Points: With a fake handoff (Fake) the QB and RB approach each other. The QB holds the ball with both hands in the middle. He extends his arms quickly, placing the ball against the RB’s stomach in the pocket and holding it there. QB and RB run next to each other for a step or two. When they part, the QB quickly pulls the ball out and hides it with one hand behind the hip away from the line of scrimmage. S/he shows their empty hand so that the defence can see it and he looks at the RB. This movement must be fluid to deceive the defence. After the fake, the QB runs several steps, sets up and passes to a wide receiver.

A special note: The RB is very important for the fake. They must be a good actor and should run at full speed. When the QB removes the ball from the pocket, the RB should clamp their arms, bend over and run 10 – 15 meters down the field. They should *not* look back at the QB. This makes the defence think they have the ball.



Safety points: When doing this drill with more than one group, make sure there is sufficient space between the stations to avoid encroachment and collisions.

Diagram:





## Tactical Group Drills for Offence and Defence

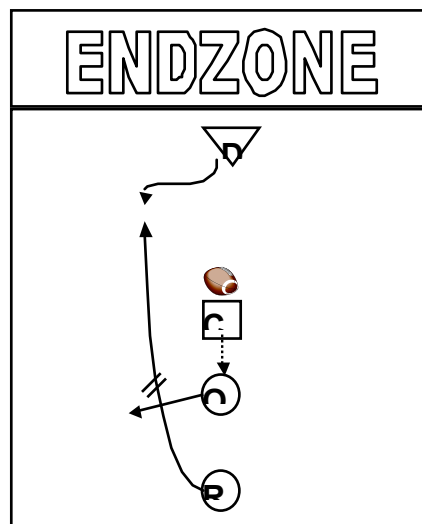
### **Drill # 1: Introductory Drill: Running Against Defenders**

Necessary Equipment: 1 football for 4 students. Each has a flag belt.

Purpose: Improvement and reinforcement of the snap and handoff for the offence, and pulling the flag in the open field for the defence.

Organization: Four players take part: a centre, a quarterback, a running back and a defender (Defensive Back). The centre snaps the ball to the quarterback who hands it off to the running back. The RB tries to run past the defensive back into the end zone (Touchdown) without having their flag pulled.

Diagram:





## Drill 2: Expansion of Drill for Passing and Running

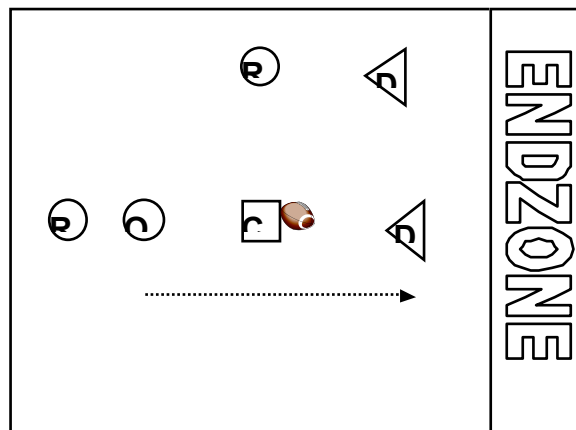
Necessary Equipment: 1 football for 6 students. Each has a flag belt.

Purpose: To integrate passing with running from Drill # 1.

Organization: Six players take part: a centre, a quarterback, a running back, a receiver and two defensive backs. The play starts with the snap. The quarterback now has three options: they may pass the ball to the receiver, they may hand off to the running back or they may fake a handoff and pass the ball. The centre now becomes active and can run a pass route after the snap. Players with the ball should try to reach the end zone (Touchdown).

The defensive backs defend their end zone and may employ either zone or man coverage. No matter what type of coverage used, the defenders must try to pull the ball carrier's flag.

Diagram:



Variation: Four offensive against three defensive players. There is no RB, so the offence can only pass.

Variation: The offence huddles and chooses a play, such as pass route, fake.



## Defensive Tactics

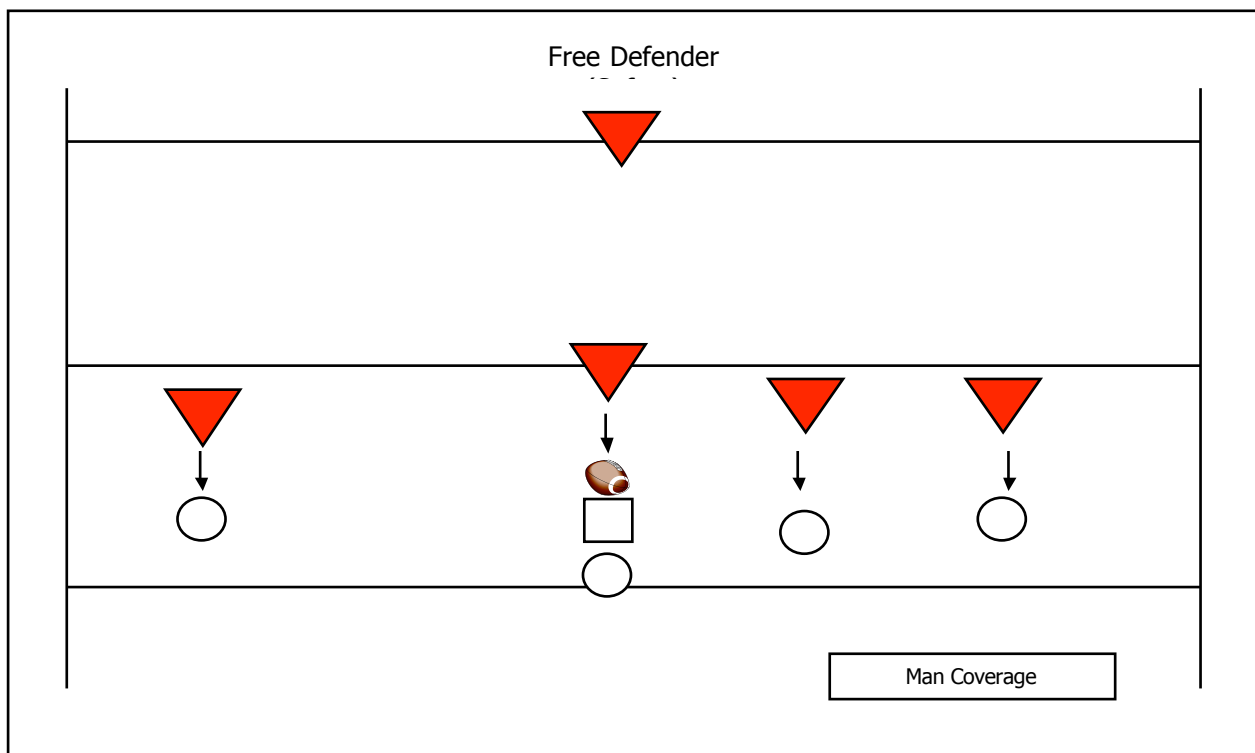
### **Man-to-Man Defence (Man Coverage)**

There are two basic ways to defend one's end zone: man coverage (also called man-to-man) or zone coverage.

In man coverage the defender lines up directly in front of their 'man' and follows them wherever they run. The defender should not allow their opponent to run by them and should attempt to stay as close as possible at all times. This will help the defender knock down or intercept (catch) a pass. If the opponent catches a pass, the defender should immediately pull their flag.

One advantage of man coverage is that it is easy to learn. Another advantage is, since the QB may not run forward with the ball, the defence always outnumbers the offence. (The offence has a maximum of 4 possible receivers.) This makes it easier for the free defender (Safety) to blitz the QB.

The disadvantage of man coverage is that the defenders have run a lot; and weaker players have difficulties keeping up with their opponents. Furthermore, since the defenders concentrate on their direct opponents, they often do not have a good overview of the developing play.







## Zone Coverage

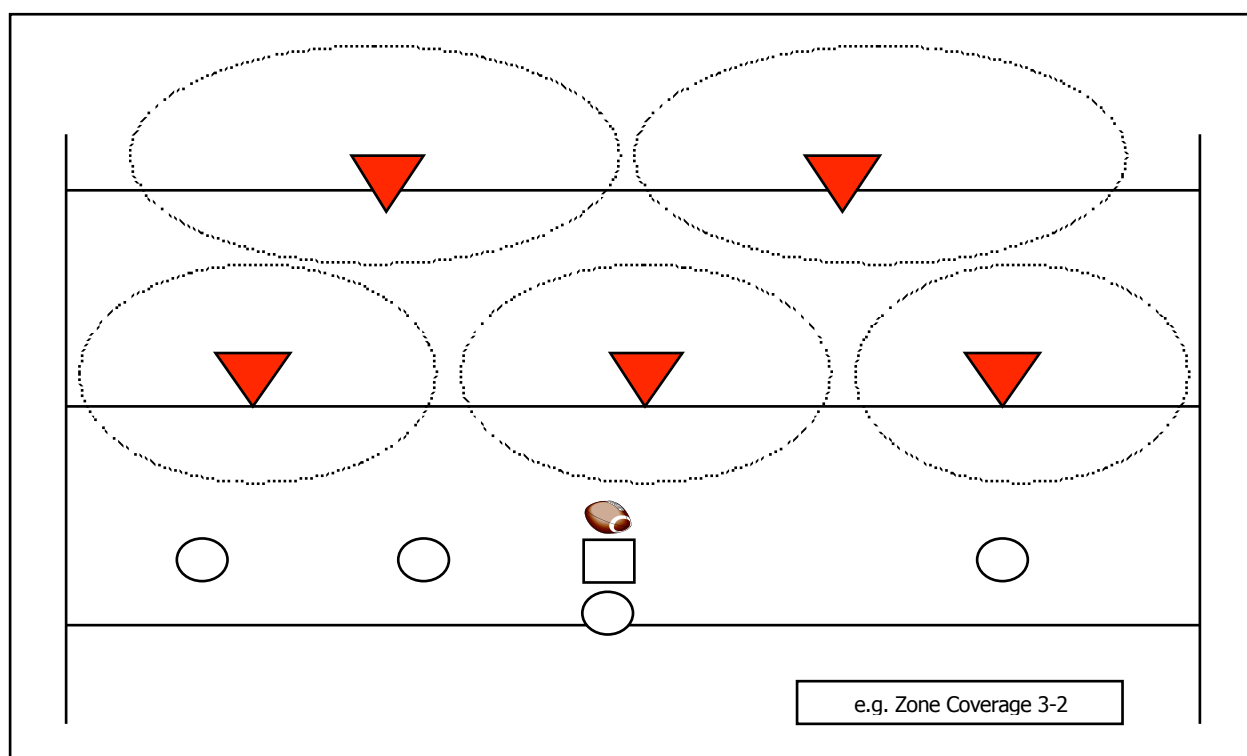
In zone coverage, the defenders do not cover specific opponents but are assigned areas or zones of the field. Each defender (Defensive Back) is assigned a zone to defend. S/he is responsible for every receiver that enters their zone. Defenders do not run over the whole field following receivers; rather, they let the receivers run to them.

If the offence sends more than one receiver into a zone (called to Flood or Flooding a Zone), the defender should attempt to look at the QB and “read” their actions. If the defender keeps the ball in sight, they need only to orient themselves on the direction of the ball to defend his zone properly. Even if there are two receivers in a zone, the QB can throw only one ball.

The advantage of zone coverage is that less talented students can be integrated into the defence optimally. Weaknesses of individual players do not endanger the performance of zone coverage to the extent that they can influence man coverage. Furthermore, the orientation is on the ball, not on the opponent, which corresponds more to the concept/nature of NFL Flag.

The disadvantage of zone coverage is its complexity. It is very difficult for beginners to get a proper feel for different areas of the field and the defensive team. This is especially true since experience and skills from other sports, such as basketball, are not easily transferred. It takes extremely good discipline to play zone coverage. Defensive backs must avoid following receivers out of their zones. Defenders must always be aware of where they are on the field so that no zone is left unprotected.

If a pass is caught or the running back gets a handoff, defenders immediately leave their zones and run to the ball carrier to pull their flag.

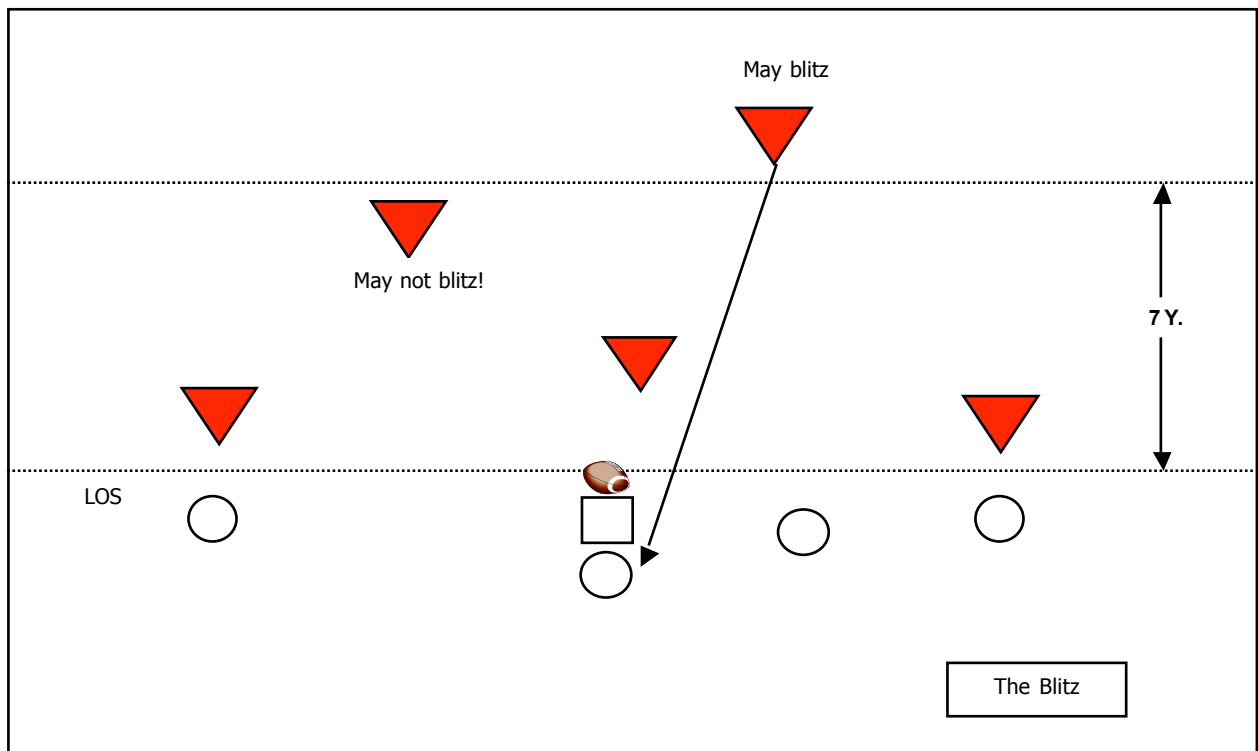




## Blitz

Defenders who are assigned to pressure the quarterback and prevent them from passing by pulling their flag must be lined up at least seven yards from the line of scrimmage at before the snap. After the snap they may rush the QB. Any number of defenders may blitz. Defenders who do not blitz may line up on the line of scrimmage.

If the QB hands the ball off, the 7-meter rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.

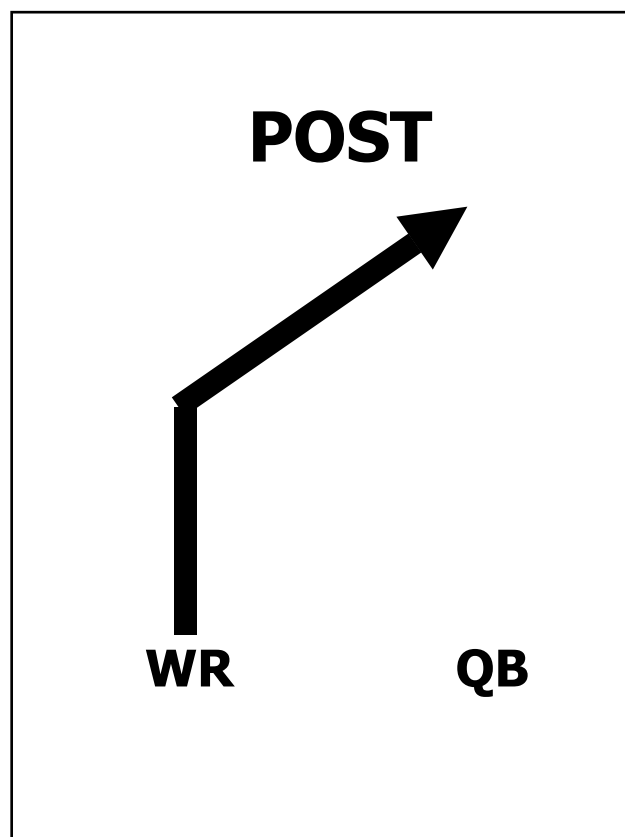
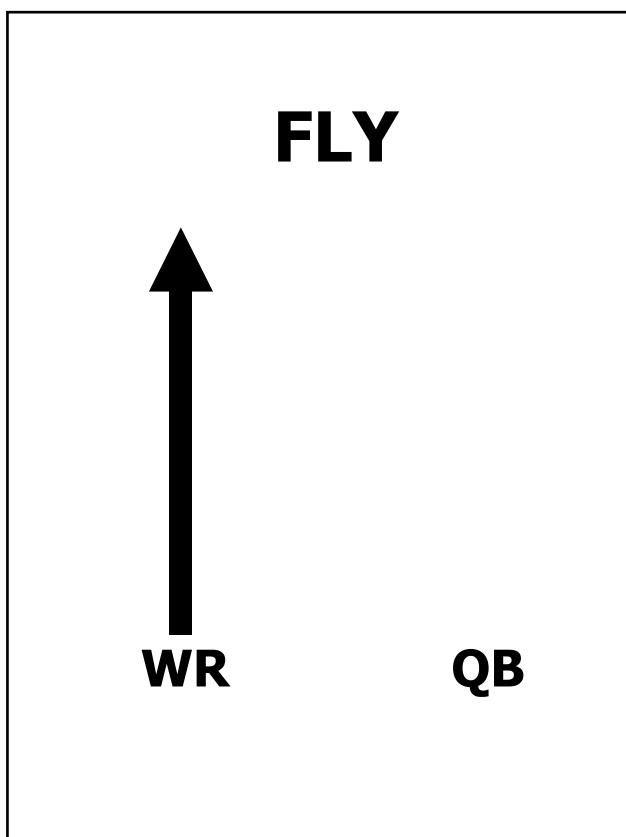
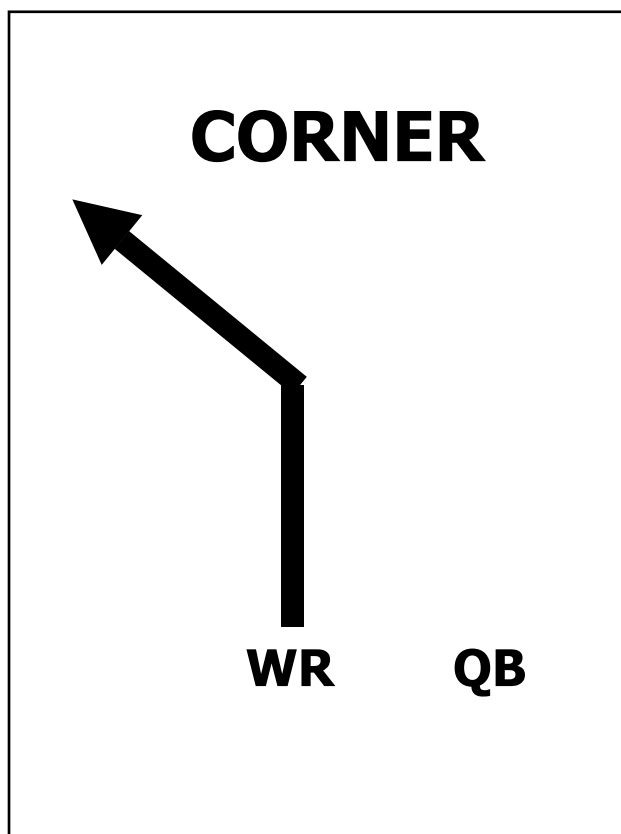
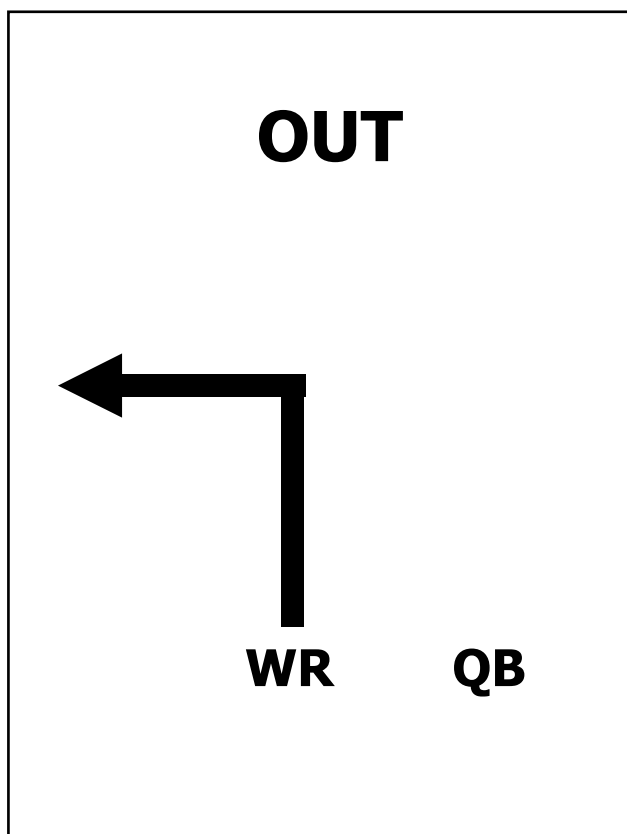


The advantage of the blitz is that it pressures the quarterback and can destroy a play before it fully develops. It can upset the timing of intricate plays and force the offence to improvise. Inexperienced quarterbacks can lose perspective and control of the team.

The disadvantage is that the defence gives up its numerical advantage. When a blitz is used, the other players are most frequently in man coverage; therefore, the offence can take better advantage of mistakes by individual defenders.

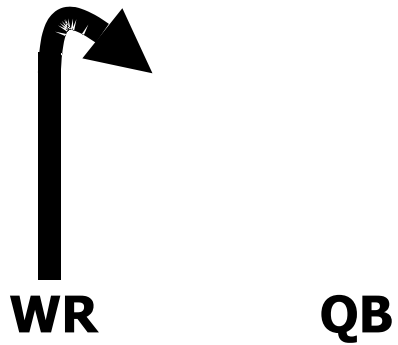


## Offensive Pass Route Cards

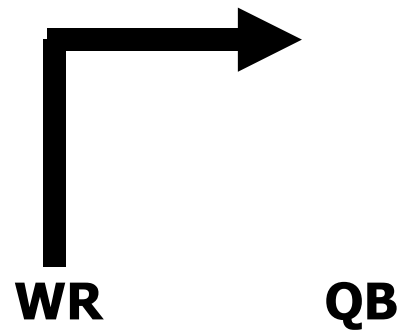




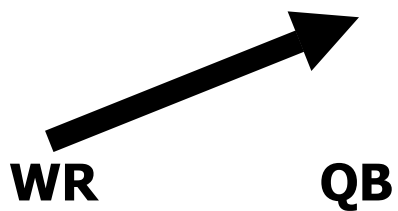
## CURL



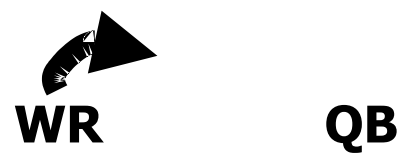
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## SLANT

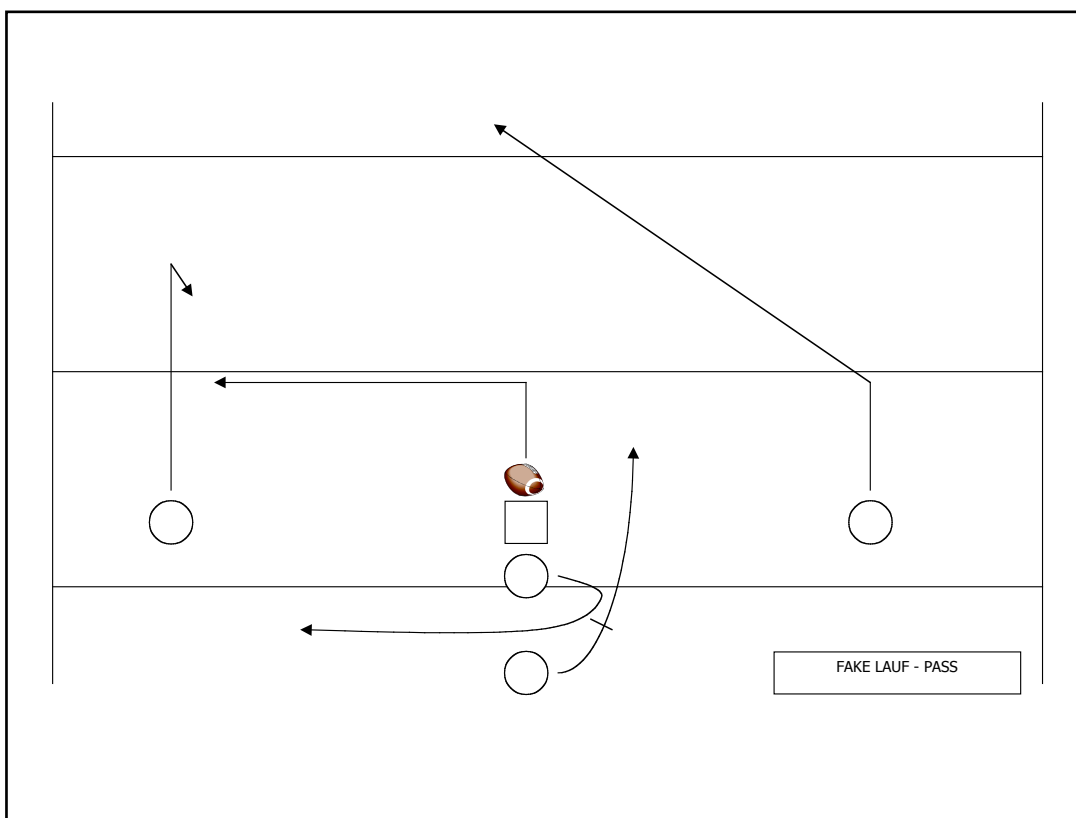
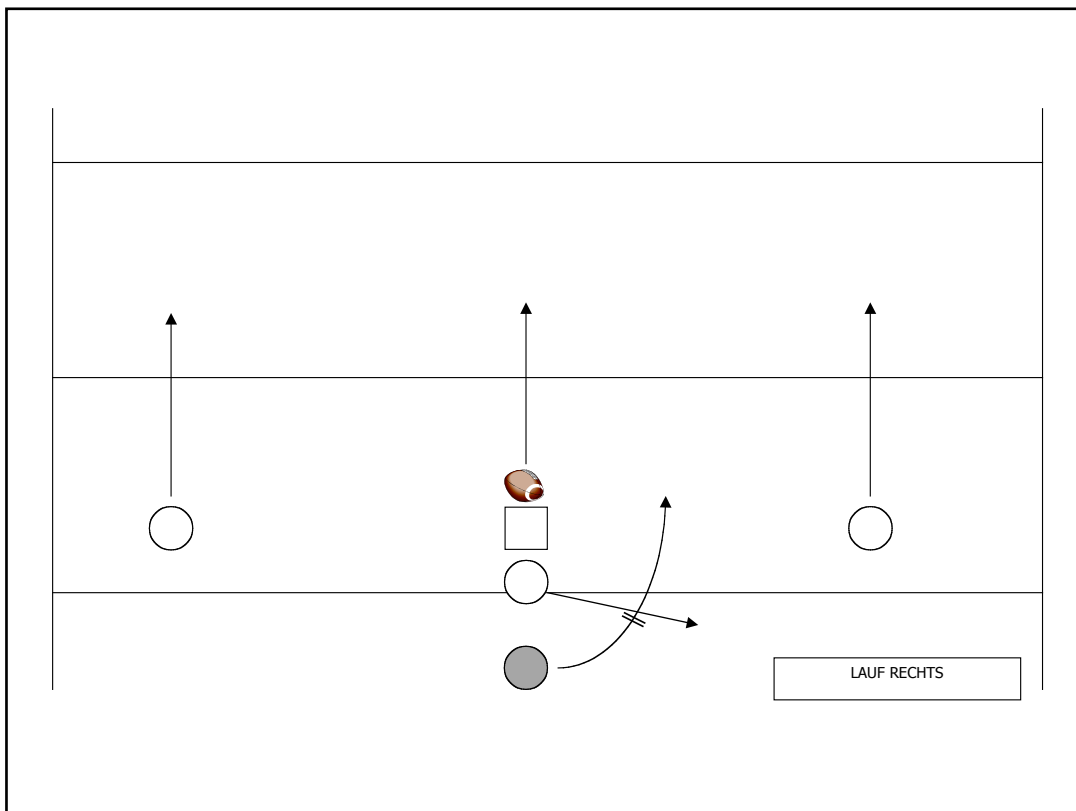


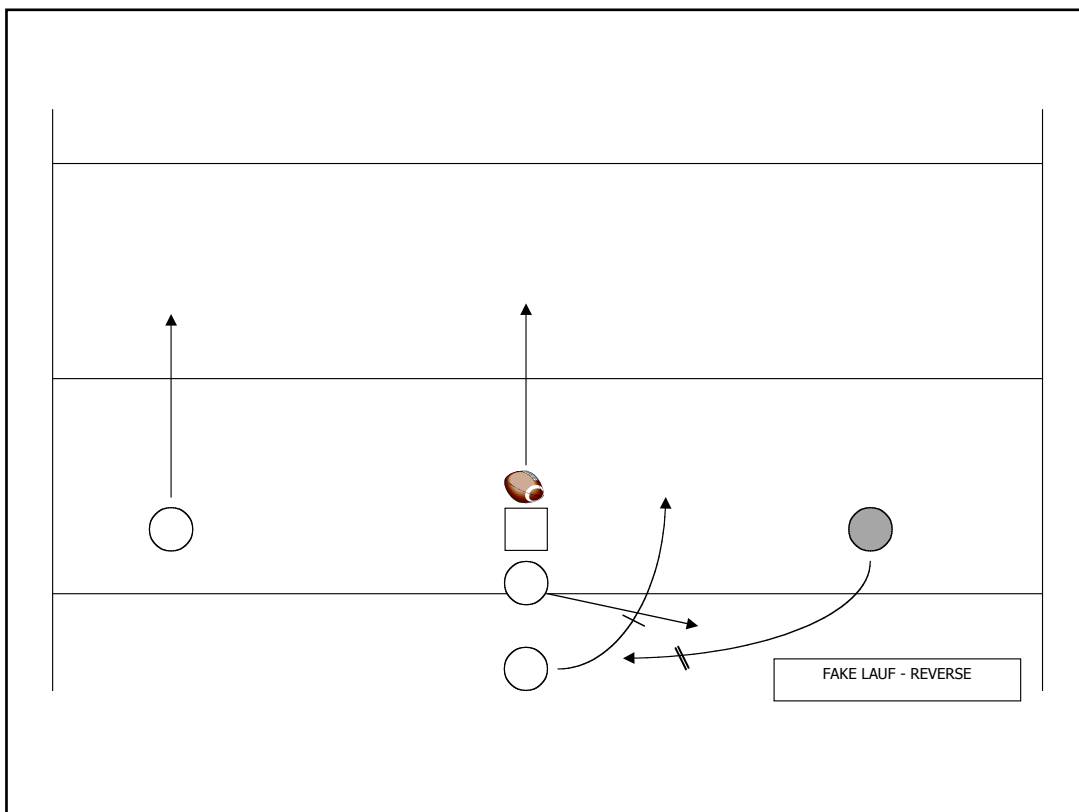
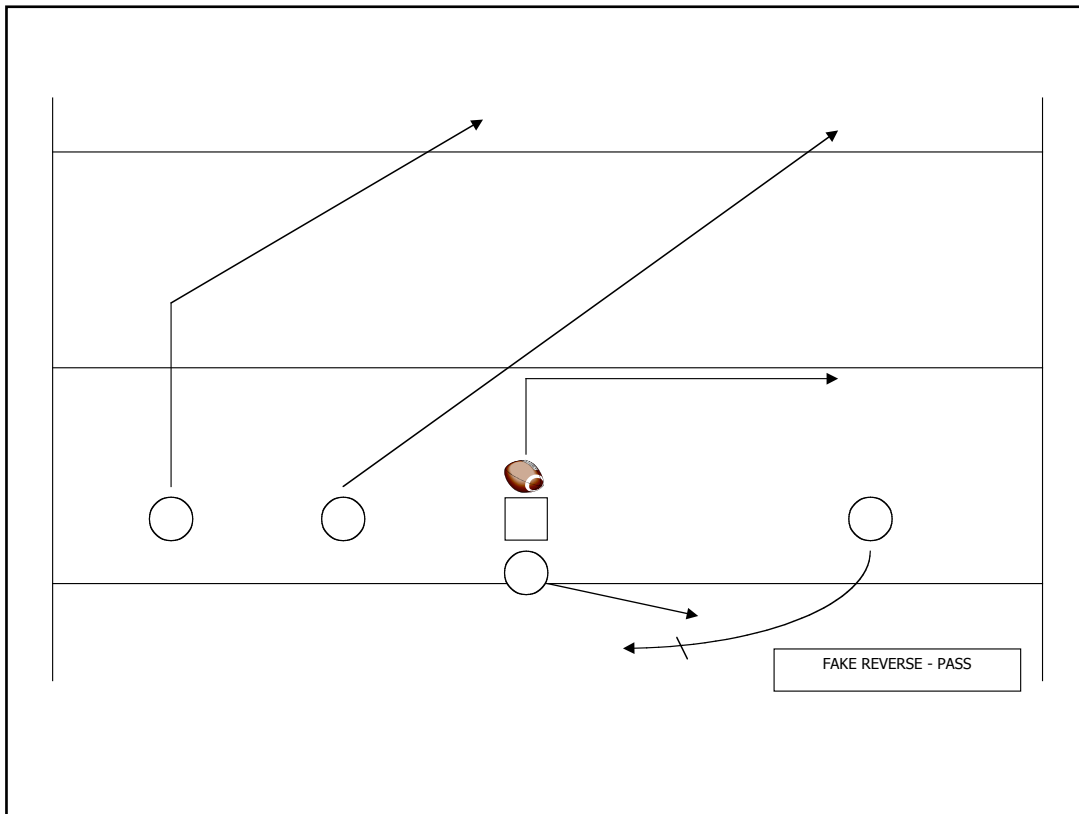
## HITCH

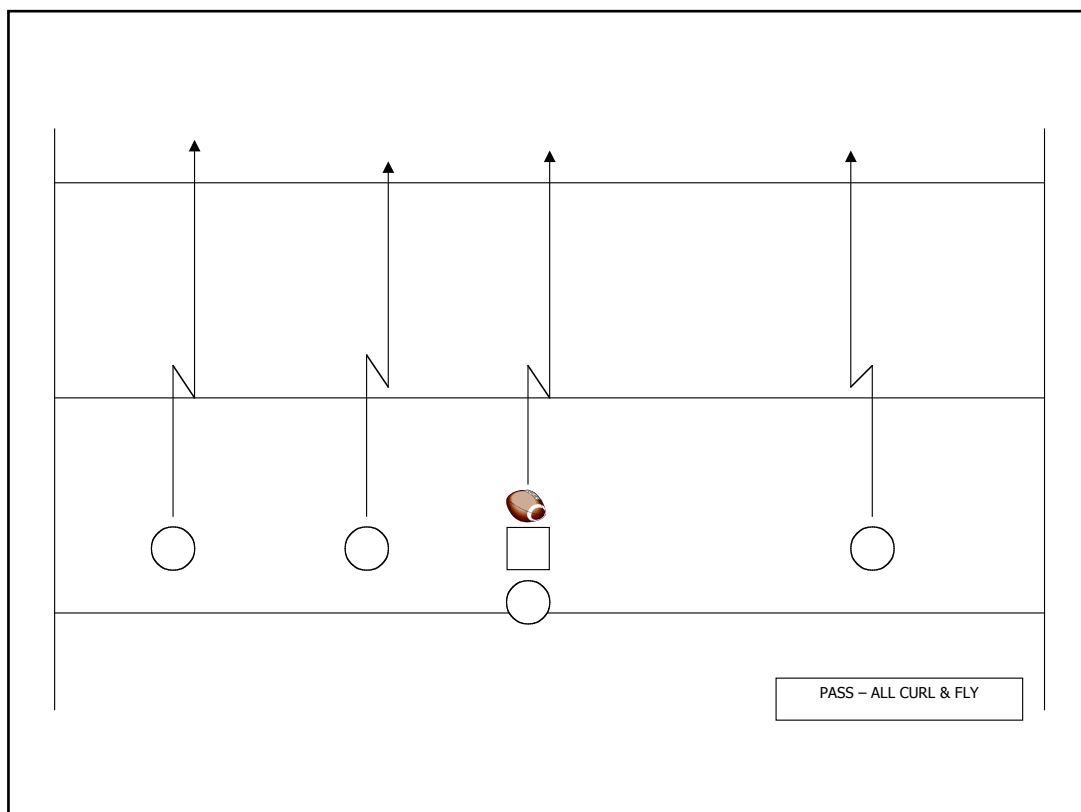
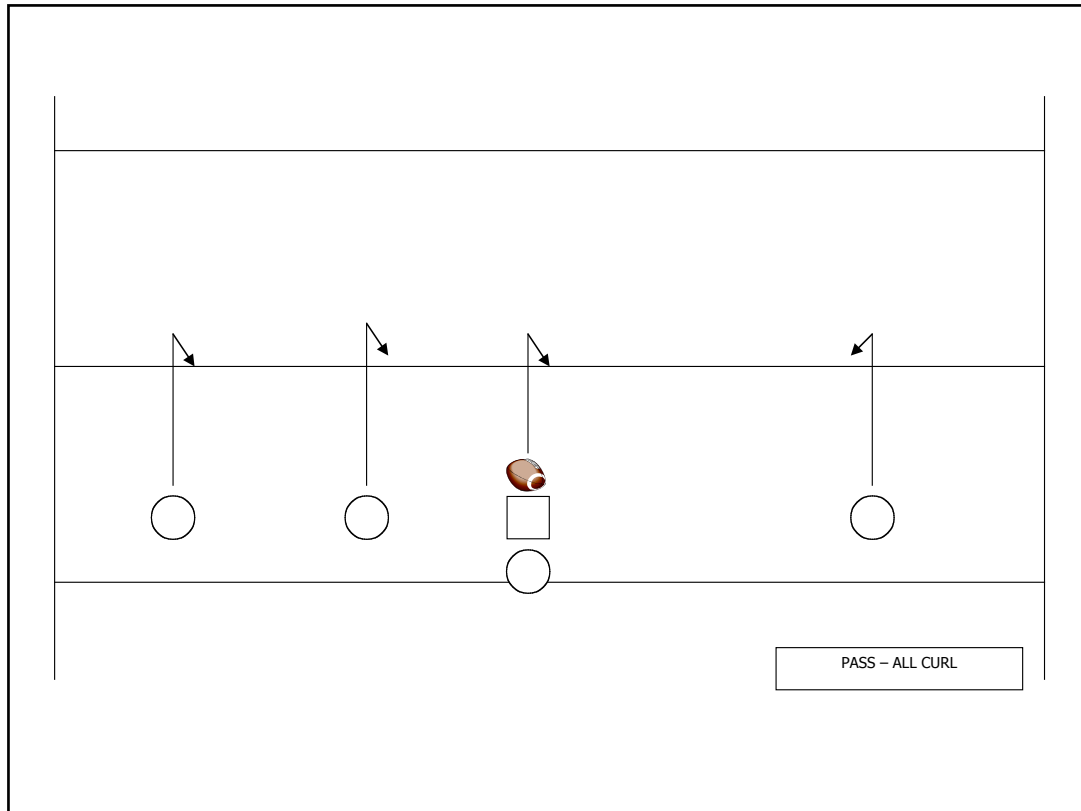


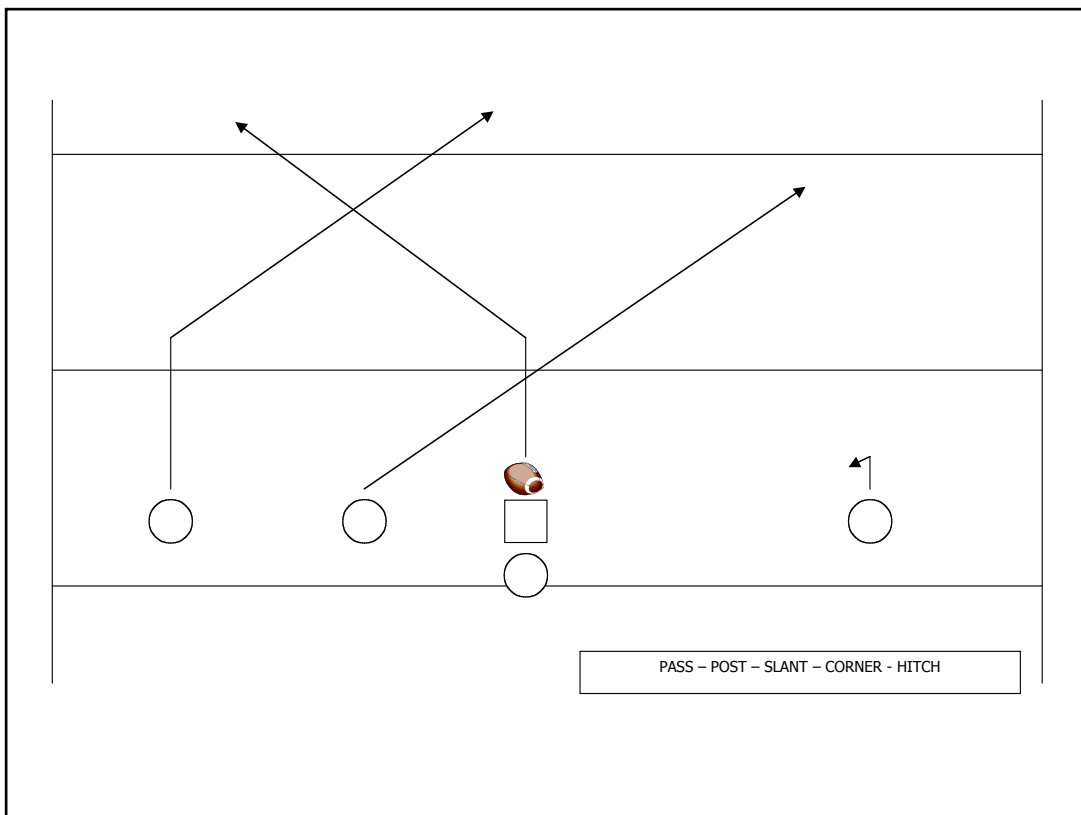
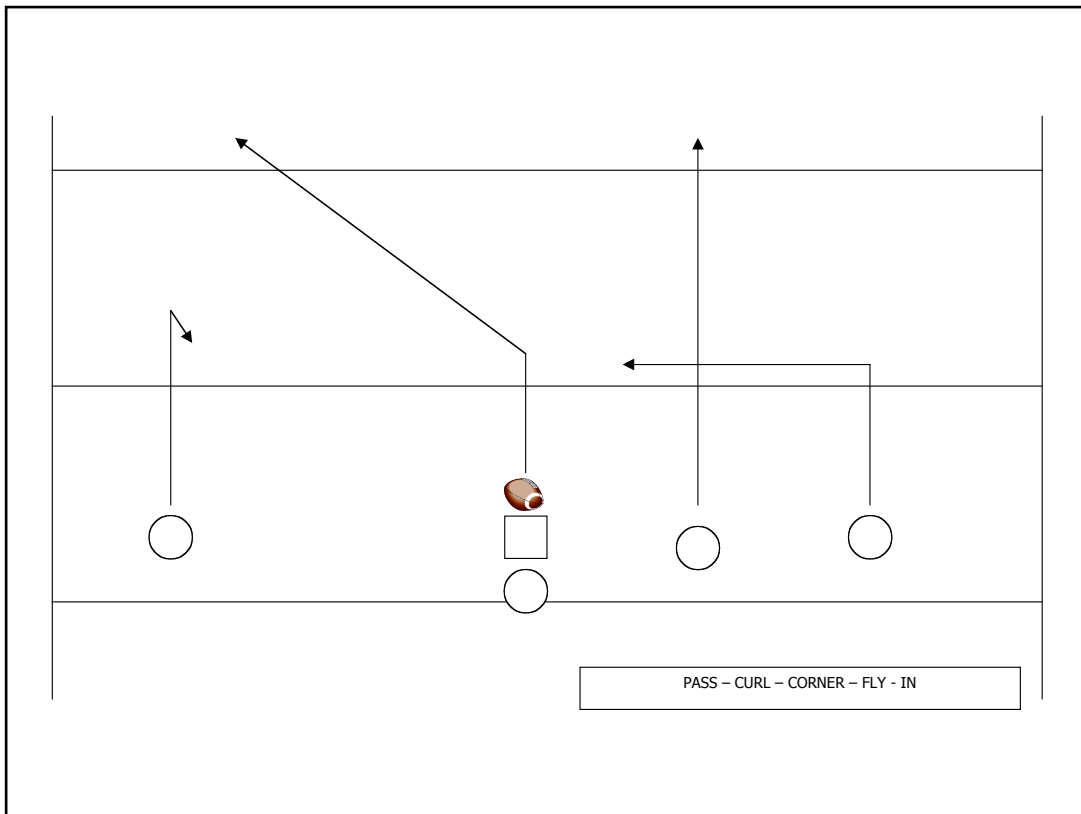


## Offensive Play Cards

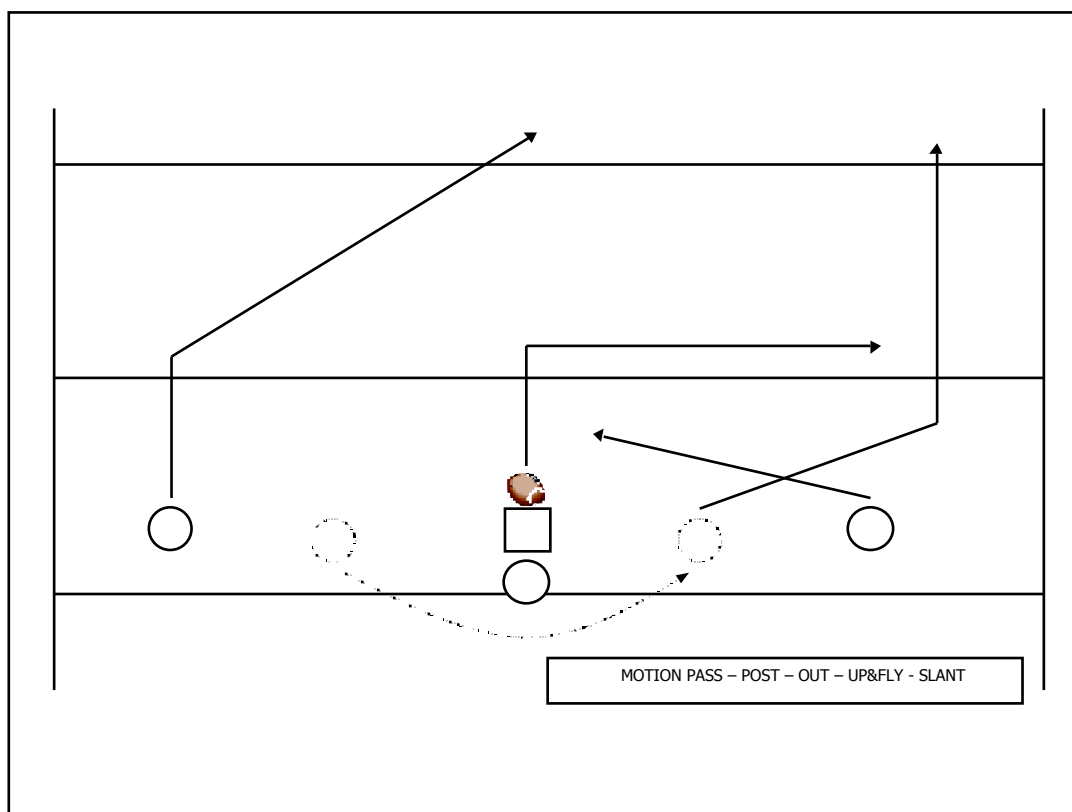




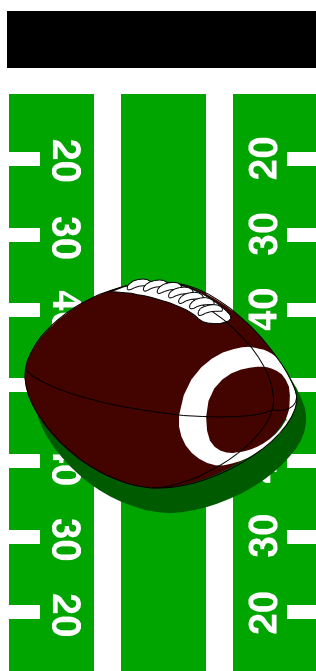








## NFL Flag Tournament



We suggest finishing the football teaching progression with an NFL Flag Tournament where complex plays and tactics for both offence and defence can be introduced.

These plays should be discussed by the players before the snap. This takes place in the offensive or defensive “Huddle.” In the offensive huddle, the players gather and the quarterback tells them what play (pass, pass routes, run, etc.) will be run next.

It is a great help if the teacher has drawn all offensive plays on separate cards so that the QB can simply display them in the huddle. Every player can see his assignment quickly and easily.

This saves a lot of time since the ball should normally be snapped no more than 30 seconds after the referee has placed the ball and signalled it ready for play.



## How to Score

Action	Points	Description
Touchdown	6	A team scores a touchdown when it runs the football into or catches it in the opponent's end zone.
Point after Touchdown	2	After a team has scored a touchdown, it receives one more play (down) to score one or two extra points. For two points, the ball is placed on the 10-yard line (10 yards from the goal line). If the team runs the ball over the goal line or throws a complete pass into the end zone, it is awarded two extra points.
Point after Touchdown	1	For one point, the ball is placed on the 5 yard line. In this case the team may only attempt a pass.
Safety points	2	When an offensive player with the ball has the flag pulled from their belt in his own end zone, the <i>defence</i> is awarded two points.  When an offensive player with the ball fumbles (drops) it in their own end zone, the <i>defence</i> is awarded two points. In both cases the <i>defence</i> is then awarded possession of the ball on its own five-yard line.
Interception Touchdown	6	When a defender intercepts a pass by the offence and carries the ball into the opponent's (offensive team's) end zone, their team is awarded a touchdown.

## Key to Symbols



Centre (Offence)



Quarterback (Offence)



Receiver without ball (Offence)



Receiver with ball (Offence)



Running back (Offence)



Defender / Defensive back (Defence)



Run



Pass



Run (with ball)



Handoff (giving the ball) to the (RB)



Fake handoff



## Glossary

Blitz	The sudden and surprise attempt by the defence to pull the quarterback's (QB) flag after the ball is snapped. Player(s) who blitz must be positioned 7 meters from the line of scrimmage at the snap. They must wait until the quarterback gives the snap count before blitzing.
Centre	The offensive player who starts each play by passing (snapping) the ball through his/her legs to the quarterback. After the snap they may run out for a pass.
Completion	A successful pass attempt.
Corner	A long pass route. The wide receiver first runs several yards straight ahead then changes direction and cuts at a 45-degree angle toward the corner of the opponent's end zone. Hence the name "Corner."
Curl	A pass route in which the wide receiver runs a certain number of yards straight ahead and stops suddenly. They then turn and shuffles back to face the quarterback to catch the pass.
Defence	The team not in possession of the football. The defence protects its scoring area (end zone).
Defensive Backs	All defensive positions in NFL Flag. They are responsible for stopping the players on offence and trying to intercept or gain possession of the football. A DB tries to pull the flag of the player with the ball.
Down	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A play or attempt. The offence has four downs (or attempts) to advance the ball over the 1<sup>st</sup> down midfield line. If successful on any one of the four attempts, the offensive team is awarded a "First Down", which means it has four more plays or attempts to reach the opponent's end zone.</li><li>2. A ball carrier that has been stopped (had his flag pulled) is called "down."</li></ol>
Easy Ups	A passing and receiving drill. Receivers line up run downfield one after the other less than full speed, concentrating on the ball. A defender may passively shadow the receiver but does not defend against the pass.
End zone	The area at the end of the field between the goal line and the end line. It is 10 meters deep and 30 meters wide. If the offence carries the ball into the end zone or catches a pass in the end zone, it gets a touchdown. The defence protects the end zone.



Flood or Flooding a Zone	When the offence sends two or more receivers into a defensive zone in an attempt to confuse and outnumber the single defender.
Fly	A long pass route. The receiver simply runs straight ahead by the defender to catch the pass from their quarterback.
Fumble	A ball, which has been dropped onto the ground. When the ball touches the ground, the play ends immediately. Players may not dive onto the ground after the football.
Guarding	Denying the defender fair opportunity to pull one's flag by placing a hand or arm in front of the flag.
Hand Off	The direct exchange of the football from one offensive player to the other. Usually the quarterback hands off to the running back
Huddle	The separate gathering of the offence (or defence) between plays on the field, in which teams call plays or discuss strategy. Coaches are allowed to huddle on the field with younger players.
In	A pass route, which starts with a wide receiver, lined up to the left or right of the quarterback. On the snap the receiver sprints straight ahead then quickly cuts in towards the quarterback to catch the pass.
Interception	A pass by the offence which a defensive player catches in the air. Possession changes after an interception. The defence may return an interception into the opponent's end zone (Interception Touchdown). If the defender with the ball has their flag taken from the belt, the intercepting team starts on offence at that point (First Down).
Interception-	When the defence carries an interception into the opponent's end zone.
Line of Scrimmage	An imaginary line described by the football. It runs parallel to the goal lines and from one sideline to the other. The ball is snapped and each play begins from the line of scrimmage.
Man Coverage	A type defence in which defenders are responsible for individual offensive players and follow them wherever they run on the field.
Offence	The team in possession of the football.
Out	A pass route in which the wide receiver sprints several yards (5 – 8) straight ahead then cuts towards the sideline.
Play	1. An attempt. Used both for offence and defence.





	2. A specific type of attempt such a running play or passing play,
Pocket	The “basket” formed by the running back’s forearms before taking the handoff. One forearm is above and the other below where the ball is to be placed.
Post	A long pass route. The wide receiver first runs several yards straight ahead then changes direction and cuts toward the centre of the field at a 45-degree angle. He heads towards the opponent’s goalposts, hence the name “Post.”
Quarterback	The offensive “playmaker.” He is the leader of the offence and calls the plays. The QB lines up behind the centre where he takes the snap. He can then either pass or hand the ball off.
Running Back	The offensive player who lines up behind or next to the QB. He is responsible for receiving handoffs from the QB and running with the ball. He may also catch passes.
Safety	The free defensive player who lines up and plays furthest from the line of scrimmage. They try to keep between any offensive player and the end zone, thereby providing the defence with extra “safety” against a touchdown.
Scramble	The running attempt the quarterback makes to elude a blitz.
SET-GO	The command that the QB gives the offence after it has lined up over the ball on the line of scrimmage. This signals to the offence that players can begin the play.
Shotgun	An offensive formation in which the QB lines up several yards behind the centre to take the snap. This allows the QB more time to look for their WR's and watch for a blitz.
Slant	A short, quick pass route. The wide receiver sprints directly from his starting position at a 45-degree in towards the QB to catch the pass.
Snap	Passing or giving the ball from the centre between their legs to the quarterback. Every play starts with the snap.
Wide Receiver	An offensive player who is responsible for catching passes from the QB and running with the ball. The WR may also take handoffs. There are up to three WR’s in the offence.
Zone	1) An area or part of the field 2) A short term for Zone Coverage



**Zone Coverage** A type of defence in which players do not cover specific opponents but are assigned specific areas or zones of the field to defend. A player is responsible only for the receivers who enter their zone.





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