

Football 101

Football 101 - Positions

➤ Offense

Quarterback

The player who receives the ball from the center at the start of each play before either handing it to the running back, throwing it to a receiver, or running with it himself. The quarterback is usually the player in charge of running the offense on the field. He is also the guy that usually informs the offense of the play while in the huddle.

Halfback

An offensive player who lines up in the backfield and generally is responsible for carrying the ball on run plays. A running back's primary role is to run with the football, he is also used as a receiver at times.

Fullback

An offensive player who lines up in the offensive backfield and generally is responsible for run blocking for the halfback and pass blocking for the quarterback. Fullbacks are usually bigger than halfbacks, and also serve as short-yardage runners.

Wide Receiver

An offensive player who lines up on or near the line of scrimmage, but split to the outside. His primary job is to catch passes from the quarterback.

Tight End

An offensive player who serves as a receiver and also a blocker. The tight end lines up beside the offensive tackle either to the right or to the left of the quarterback.

Offensive Tackle

A member of the offensive line. There are two tackles on every play, and they line up on the outside of the offensive guards.

Offensive Guard A member of the offensive line. There are two guards on every play, and they line up on either side of the offensive center.

Center The offensive lineman who hikes (or snaps) the ball to the quarterback at the start of each play. The center lines up in the middle of the offensive line, between the offensive guards.

➤ **Defense**

Defensive End A defensive player who lines up at the end of the defensive line. The job of the defensive end is to contain the running back on running plays to the outside, and rush the quarterback on passing plays.

Defensive Tackle A defensive player who lines up on the interior of the defensive line. The duties of a defensive tackle include stopping the running back on running plays, getting pressure up the middle on passing plays, and occupying blockers so the linebackers can roam free.

Linebacker A defensive player who lines up behind the defensive linemen and in front of the defensive backfield. The linebackers are a team's second line of defense. Each team has two outside linebackers. In a 4-3 defense, teams have one inside linebacker, usually referred to as a middle linebacker. In a 3-4 defense teams have two inside linebackers.

Cornerback A defensive back that generally lines up on the outside of the formation and is usually assigned to cover a wide receiver.

Safety A defensive back that lines up in the secondary. He is generally between, deeper than the cornerbacks. His primary duties include helping the cornerbacks in pass coverage.

➤ **Special Teams**

Gunner

The members of the special teams who specialize in racing downfield to tackle the kick or punt returner. The gunners usually line up on the outside of the offensive line and are often double teamed by blockers.

Holder

The player who catches the snap from the center and places it down for the place-kicker to attempt to kick it through the uprights of the goalpost. On an attempted field goal, the holder must catch the ball and put it into a good kicking position, ideally with the laces facing away from the kicker.

Kick Returner

A kick returner is the player that catches kickoffs and attempts to return them in the opposite direction. He is usually one of the faster players on the team, often a reserve wide receiver.

Long Snapper

The center position as it would be played on offense, but this player specializes in making longer snaps for punts and field goal attempts. A long-snapper generally has to snap the ball seven-to-eight yards behind him with the accuracy that allows the holder or punter to handle the ball cleanly.

Place-kicker

The player who kicks the ball on kickoffs, extra point attempts, and field goal attempts. A place-kicker either kicks the ball while it's being held by a teammate or kicks it off a tee.

Punter

The player who stands behind the line of scrimmage, catches the long snap from the center, and then kicks the ball after dropping it toward his foot. The punter generally comes in on fourth down to punt the ball to the other team with the idea of driving the other team as far back as possible before they take possession of the ball.

Punt Returner

The job of a punt returner is to catch the ball after it has been punted and run it back toward the punting team's end zone.

Football 101 – The Football Field

Learning the exact dimensions of the field is not necessarily that important, but it is good to have a basic knowledge of the field itself.

- The playing field is 100 yards long.
- It has stripes running across the field at five-yard intervals.
- There are shorter lines, called hash marks, marking each one-yard interval. (not shown)
- On each end of the playing field is an end zone (red section with diagonal lines) that extends ten yards.
- The total field is 120 yards long and 160 feet wide.
- Located on the very back line of each end zone is a goal post.
- The spot where the end zone meets the playing field is called the goal line.
- The yardage from the goal line is marked at ten-yard intervals, up to the 50-yard line, which is in the center of the field.
 - After reaching the 50-yard line, the yardage markers start to descend (40, 30, 20, 10) every ten yards until they reach the opposite goal line.

Football 101 - The Basic Functions of a Football Team

- Each game features two teams playing against each other.
- Each team is allowed 11 players on the field at a time. Any more than 11 could result in a penalty.
- Unlimited substitution is permitted, but players may only enter the field when the ball is dead.
- Each team is comprised of an offense, defense, and special teams.
- If team A has possession of the ball, they use their offensive team to attempt to advance the ball toward the opponents end zone.
- If team B has the ball, team A will use their defensive team to attempt to stop team B from advancing the ball.
- For kicking play, both teams will use their special teams.

Football 101 - Object of the Game

- The object of the game is to outscore your opponent by advancing the football into their end zone for as many touchdowns as possible while holding them to as few as possible. There are other ways of scoring, but a touchdown is usually the prime objective.

Football 101 - The Basics of Beginning a Football Game

Before each game, the captains from each team and the referee meet at the center of the field for the coin toss.

- The winner of the coin toss has the option of starting the game by kicking the ball to the other team or receiving the kickoff from the other team.
- The game begins when one of the teams kicks off to the other.
- The receiving team must catch the ball and try to advance it as far back toward the kicking team as possible.
- The play ends when the player with the ball is knocked to the ground (tackled), or makes it all the way to the kicking team's end zone (touchdown).
- The spot where the kick returner was tackled becomes the line of scrimmage. The line of scrimmage is a term for the place the ball is spotted before a play is run.
- Once this starting point is established, the offensive squad of the receiving team will come in and try to move the ball toward the opposition's end zone.

Football 101 - Understanding Down and Distance

Understanding down and distance is probably the biggest key to understanding football, so make sure you really understand this part before moving on to the next section.

- Basically, a down is a play. From the time the ball is snapped (put into play), to the time the play is whistled over by the officials, is considered one down.
- A team's offense is given four downs (plays) to move ten yards toward the opponent's end zone.
- Distance is the number of yards a team needs to get a new set of four downs.
- If they make the ten yards needed within four downs, they are given a new set of downs. This is called getting a first down.
- If they don't make it the required ten yards, the other team's offense takes possession of the ball.

An Example

- The first play of a series is called first-and-ten because it is the first down and ten yards are needed to receive a new set of four downs.
- Suppose on the first play, the team on offense picks up three yards. The next play would then be second-and-seven, because it is the second play of the set and they still need seven yards to get a first down.
- If they were to pick up six yards on the second play it would leave them one yard shy of the first down marker, therefore setting up a third-and-one situation. Third-and-one because it would be the third play of the series and they would still need one yard to get a first down.
- If the team with the ball can pick up one yard or more on the third-down play, then they will be given a first down, which means they get to start all over with a new set of four downs.
- A team can continue moving the football down the field as long as they continue to pick up first downs.

Fourth-Down Strategies

If a team fails to gain the required yardage on third down, several things could happen on fourth down:

- A team can elect to "go for it" on fourth down and try to pick up the remaining yardage, but they run the risk of turning the ball over to the other team if they do not get to the first down marker. If they do not get the required yardage, the other team takes possession of the ball at the spot of the last tackle and now has four downs to move ten yards back in the other direction.
- The majority of the time, teams will elect to "punt" the ball away on fourth down. A punt is simply a form of kicking the ball that gives possession of the ball to the other team, but also pushes them back considerably farther away from the end zone.
- Another option is to kick a field goal. If a team feels they are close enough to kick the ball between the upright bars of the goal post in their opponent's end zone, they may attempt a field goal, which is worth three points when converted successfully.

After a Score

- After a team scores via a touchdown or field goal, they must, in turn, kick off to the other team, and the process begins all over again.

Football 101 - Various Methods of Scoring

- The biggest goal for an offense, every time they take possession of the ball, is to score a touchdown. To score a touchdown, a player must carry the ball across the opposition's goal line, or catch a pass in the end zone. Once the ball crosses the plane of the goal line while it is in a player's possession, it is scored a touchdown. A touchdown is worth six points.
- The team scoring a touchdown is given the bonus of trying to add one or two more points. These are called extra point conversion attempts.
- If a team elects to go for two extra points, they will line up at the two-yard line and make one attempt at either running or passing the ball into the end zone. If they make it, they are awarded two points. If they don't, they get no extra points.
- They can also elect to go for just one extra point by kicking the ball through the goal posts from the two-yard line.
- Another way for a team to score is by kicking a field goal. When a team finds themselves in a fourth-down situation, many times they will attempt to kick a field goal if they feel they are close enough for their kicker to kick the football between the upright bars of the goal post in the opponent's end zone. A field goal is worth three points.
- A team can also pick up two points by tackling an opponent possessing the ball in their own end zone. This is called a safety!

To summarize:

Touchdown = 6 points

Extra Point Conversion Run or Pass = 1 point

Two-Point Conversion Kick = 2 points

Field Goal = 3 points

Safety = 2 points



Defensive holding or illegal use of hands

No defensive player is allowed to hold or push an offensive receiver or back on a passing play past the initial five yard chuck-zone. The first five yards past the line of scrimmage, the defense may jam; hold up, the receiver to keep them from getting by, but after that a penalty is awarded to the offense. Special Notes: Automatic first down awarded to offense.



Delay of game

This penalty can be called on either offense or defense, but the foul is most commonly committed by the offense. The penalty occurs on offense when they allow the play clock to run down to zero without snapping the ball. The penalty can be called on the defense if the referees feel that the defense did not allow the offense to get the play off in time for any reason. A similar foul is delay on kickoff.



Encroachment

When the defense comes across the line of scrimmage and actually touches an offensive player before the snap, encroachment is called.



Excessive time outs

A team cannot call more than three time-outs a half. If this occurs, a five-yard penalty is assessed on the offense and the clock is restarted.



Facemask

Similar to the above, if the facemask is deemed to be unintentional and non-flagrant by the referees, then only a five-yard penalty is assessed.



False Start

A false start occurs when an offensive player moves before the ball is snapped. This penalty is not called if a player is in motion, but that player must either be moving parallel to the line of scrimmage (a receiver in motion) or set before the snap to not be in violation. Motion is a common tool used by coaches to try to free up a receiver, or confuse a defense and is simply a player changing their position on the field before the snap. Only receivers, running backs, and the quarterback may be in motion.



Forward pass thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage

A player cannot throw the ball forward once passed the line of scrimmage. Special notes: Loss of down along with the five-yard penalty.



Forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage after ball has already crossed the line of scrimmage

A player can not take the ball passed the line of scrimmage, back behind the line, and then throw the ball forward.

Illegal return

A player that signals a fair catch may not try to return the ball.

Illegal Formation

The offense must have seven players on the line of scrimmage or they are guilty of illegal formation.



Illegal Shift

A player can not make a motion as if they play were live if they are simply changing their position. Once a player shifts his position he must not make a movement for at least a second before the ball is snapped. More than one player may be shifting at once as long as all get set.



Illegal Motion

Similar to illegal shift except the player does not come to a stop. Also, only one player is allowed in motion and the motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage.



Illegal Substitution

A player may only enter the field of play while the ball is dead. They must also only leave crossing their **own** sideline. Substitutes entering the game must enter the field passed the numerals. Finally, except for the last two minutes of the half, the offense must not rush to the line and hurry up a snap if they are substituting.



Invalid fair catch signal

The player receiving a kick must make a noticeable wave of his hand above his head for it to be a legal fair catch signal.



Offside

Each team must be lined up on their line of scrimmage and cannot be lined up in the neutral zone when the ball is snapped. The neutral zone is the area between the front and back of the ball.

Pass touched by receiver after he has gone out of bounds

Once a player goes out of bounds he is not allowed to touch the ball on that play.

Player out of bounds at snap

All eligible players must be on the field of play at the snap of the ball.

Running into kicker

If a player hits the kicker and does not touch the ball, but the hit is not flagrant, only the five-yard penalty is called.

Second forward pass behind the line

A player may not make more than one forward pass from behind the line of scrimmage.



Too many men on the field

Each team may only have eleven men on the field while the play is live.