

Season Plan for 3 to 5-Year-Olds

At these ages, children need understanding and skills to enable them to play a game. Tactically, this means helping them to see the need to play good pass defense and play as a team, as well as learning individual skills. We give an overview on the next page you can use as a weekly guide. It reflects the tactics and skills, rules and traditions, and fitness and character development concepts that you should cover.

Overview of the Season Plan

The Season Plan on the next page provides a weekly guide and addresses tactical and skill components, and other activities fully detailed in the Practice Plans document. The Season Plan has five components:

- **Purpose:** The purpose of the practice is your main focus.
- **Tactics and Skills:** Tactics are knowing what to do during the game (and when to do it), and they require an understanding of the problems faced by each team during the game and how those problems can be solved. Ways to maintain possession of the ball would be tactics. Skills are the physical skills traditionally taught, such as controlling the ball during play.
- **Rules and Traditions:** You will teach the rules of the sport to young children gradually, as part of playing games and learning skills. Traditions are those unwritten rules that players follow to be courteous and safe, such as raising your hand when you foul someone or playing cooperatively with the others on your team.
- **Fitness Concepts:** Even young children can understand some simple concepts about health and fitness, such as the idea that exercise strengthens your heart, so some of these are suggested as the focus for brief discussions during practice.
- **Character Development Concepts:** The four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility—can all be related to many situations arising while playing team sports. For example, playing cooperatively with teammates shows that you care about them. Again, we'll suggest some specific ideas for briefly discussing character development values.

YMCA Rookies Flag Football Season Plan

4- to 5-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1	To learn basic offensive skills	Passing, catching	Passing rules	General fitness Learn heart size and location.	Four core values Incorporate the four core values.
2	To learn basic offensive skills	Passing, catching	Receiving rules	General fitness Heart pumps blood through blood vessels.	Responsibility Stay under control.
3	To learn a pass pattern	Square-outs	No-block rule	General fitness Learn lung size and location.	Responsibility Work together as a team.
4	To set up the offensive attack	Passing, catching, curls, running pass patterns	Defensive rules	Cardiorespiratory fitness Exercise increases heart and lung strength.	Honesty Be honest if you make a mistake.
5	To stop offensive progress	Pulling flags	Flag guarding	Muscle fitness Exercise increases muscle strength.	Respect Respect all players in the game.
6	To learn a new pass pattern	Slants	Running rules	Muscle fitness Flexibility is how far a muscle can stretch or a joint can move.	Caring Care enough to share the ball.
7	To run effective pass patterns and get open	Passing, catching, running pass patterns	Offsides	Training and conditioning Warming up helps prevent injuries and gets your body ready to play flag football.	Caring Be supportive of your teammates.
8	To learn a new pass pattern	Streaks	Pass interference	Safety Learn to define personal space.	Responsibility Everyone has a role to play.
9	To run effective pass patterns and get open	Passing, catching, running pass patterns	Illegal rushing	Healthy habits Exercise requires fluid replacement.	Responsibility You are responsible to everyone on the team.
10	To cover pass receivers	Covering receivers	Defensive holding	Healthy habits Snacks are any foods you eat between meals.	Keeping perspective Learn and have fun while playing.

Note: The plan is for use with the 3 to 5-year-old age group referenced in the YMCA's "Coaching Flag Football" online course.

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chapter

6

Practice Plans for 4- to 5- Year-Olds

This chapter contains 10 practice plans to use with your 4- and 5-year-old YMCA Rookies flag football players. Before we get to those plans though, we'll explain the modifications to the game that are used in Rookies play, and we'll give you a quick overview of what's in the practice plans and how they are to be used.



Game Modifications

YMCA Rookies play 6 v 6 games. This speeds up the game and gives all the kids more opportunities to be involved in play. Have no more than 12 players on a team.

The field is also smaller than regulation; we recommend a 30-yard by 60-yard field. Again, to keep kids active and to give them more touches of the ball and opportunities to learn, you will see that we quite often recommend having two 3 v 3 games going at once, on separate halves of the field, or three-player teams performing games and skill practices in separate quadrants of the field. We highly recommend you have at least one assistant coach to help you watch and instruct the players. Encourage parents to help you; the more assistants you have, the more attention each child can get.



Another modification is in the ball itself: we recommend using either a Nerf ball or a youth-size ball (10 1/4 to 10 1/2 inches). If you do try the youth-size ball and find that your players are having trouble gripping or throwing it, be ready to switch to the Nerf ball.

Many of the rules for flag football have been adapted to make them more appropriate for the age and skill level of 4- and 5-year-olds. For example, at this level blocking is not allowed, kickoffs and punting do not take place, there are no running plays, and all offensive players are eligible to receive forward passes. See chapter 9 for more on flag football rules.



Practice Plan Organization

Each plan contains the following sections:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ⊙ Purpose | ⊙ Game 1 |
| ⊙ Equipment | ⊙ Skill Practice(s) |
| ⊙ Warm-Up | ⊙ Game 2 |
| ⊙ Fitness Circle | ⊙ Team Circle |

Purpose focuses on what you want to teach your players during that practice; it is your main theme for that day. *Equipment* notes what you'll need on hand for that practice (and the size of the field). The *Warm-Up* section gives you 5 to 10 minutes of warm-up activities. This segment will be followed by 5 minutes of the *Fitness Circle*, during which you briefly talk with players about an idea that relates to health or fitness. Then, in *Game 1*, you'll play a game that puts your players in a game-like situation and introduces them to the main tactic or skill that you want them to learn that day. (Note that in some games we say, play a "hot" defense or a "cold" defense. A "hot" defense is one that is going all-out, trying its hardest to stop the offense. A "cold" defense is one that is playing at about half speed, in more of a "contain" situation—perhaps putting light pressure on the quarterback but not trying to down him or her, or playing a bit off the receivers, allowing them to make catches and then closing in on them.)

Then, using the games approach as described in chapter 4, you'll guide your players through a short question-and-answer session that leads to the *Skill Practice*. (We've provided sample responses for your players so you can see where to guide them.) Here you will have one or two skill practices in which you will teach players the skill and then conduct a fun drill for them to practice that skill. Remember to use the IDEA approach to teaching skills, as described in chapter 4.

Chapter 8 contains descriptions of all the skills, so a page reference will be given to guide you to the appropriate description there. The introduction, demonstration, and explanation should be very brief to fit young children's short attention spans. As the players practice, you attend to individual children, guiding them with *Coach's Cues* (which are provided in the practice plans) or further demonstration.


After the skill practices, you will go on to *Game 2*. Have the kids play another game to let them use the skills they just learned and to see how those skills fit into the context of a game. We provide *Coach's Points* for you to help your players focus on the most important points. And with many practices, we provide *Variations* to give you ideas on how to modify the games to make them easier or more challenging, based on your observations of your players' skill levels.

The practice concludes with a *Team Circle*, which focuses on character development. You take about 5 minutes to talk *with* (not just *to*) your players about some aspect of the game that relates to one of the four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Following this, you wrap up the practice with a reminder of the next practice day and time and a preview of what will be taught in that next practice.

A note about Fitness and Team Circles—these times are meant to be true discussions, not lectures where you do all the talking and the kids do all the listening. Ask the questions provided and wait for your players to respond. Don't feed them the answers that we provide; these answers are only meant to help you guide the discussion. The kids' wording of answers doesn't have to match what we give here; that wording is presented for your benefit so that you know where to guide the players. Your role in Team Circles is as much to ask questions and get players to respond as it is to dole out information.

The plans in this chapter, combined with the information in the rest of this book, should give you everything you need to lead practices. Just remember to be patient and caring as you work on skills. Kids will progress at different rates, and it's more important that they learn the sport in a positive way than it is for them to learn quickly.

Key to Diagrams



Player movement without ball	—	
Player movement with ball	—	
Pass	—	
Offensive players	—	 
Defensive players	—	 
Other players	—	
Sequence of movement	—	1, 2, 3
Cone	—	

Practice 1

PURPOSE

To learn basic offensive skills

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

- Begin each practice with 5 to 10 minutes of warm-up activities to get players loosened up and ready to go.
- Have the kids jog one lap around the field and get into a circle. Lead them in five jumping jacks and stretches for their legs and arms.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Following the warm-up, gather the players and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

Key Idea: General fitness

Gather the children into a group. "Make a fist. That's *how big* your heart is. Place your fist on your chest. That is *where* your heart is. You can't see it, but it's there. While everyone's heart is at the same spot, everyone has a different heart size. A person's heart is as big as their fist. So that means that some hearts are big and some are small. Think of your dad's, uncle's, or older brother's fist. His heart is (or their hearts are) a lot bigger than yours. What about the heart of a big football player?"

Activity: Heart rhyme

Have the children sing the following to the tune of "Mulberry Bush."

Your body has a heart, heart, heart,
heart, heart, heart,
heart, heart, heart,
Your body has a heart, heart, heart,
Point to where it is.
Your body has a heart, heart, heart,
heart, heart, heart,
heart, heart, heart,
Your body has a heart, heart, heart,
And it's the size of your *FIST*. (Shout
the last word.)

Practice 1

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Following the Fitness Circle, get the kids playing a game. Then interrupt each game with a time of questions and answers—with you asking the questions and your players providing the answers (about what the goal of the game was and what skills and tactics they needed to perform to succeed in the game). For many games, we provide diagrams or figures showing how the game is played. We also often provide coaching points for you to pass along to your players during the games.

Goal

Players will get the ball into the end zone.

Description

Play two simultaneous 3 v 3 games. On defense, play player-to-player. The offense starts at midfield and moves downfield in a nonstop passing game—no huddles, no plays, just receivers moving downfield and catching the ball. They are down where they catch it—and the receiver who caught the ball becomes the quarterback, as his or her two teammates immediately go out for passes farther down the field. The defense becomes the offense on an interception or incomplete pass—otherwise the offense keeps moving down the field until they score, so long as they keep completing passes. (You may want to allow the offense to have three incomplete passes before the ball changes hands; keep the game moving, but don't make it too confusing for the players.) Give one point for each completed pass and six points for each touchdown.

Coach: What's the goal of this game?

Players: To get the ball into the end zone.

Coach: How do you do that?

Players: By throwing the ball so my teammates can catch it.

Coach: How do you throw the ball?

Players: Use the right grip and arm motion.

You'll follow game 1 with one or more skill practices, during which you'll introduce, demonstrate, and explain a skill or tactic, and then attend to your players as they practice it. The question-and-answer session, in which your players tell you what skills and tactics they needed to be successful in the game, leads directly to the skill practice. Remember, the sample player responses are your cue as to where to guide them. We often provide coaching points with the skill practices; pass these points along to your players. We also provide Coach's Cues—phrases to help your players focus on the task at hand—in many skill practices and games.



Practice 1

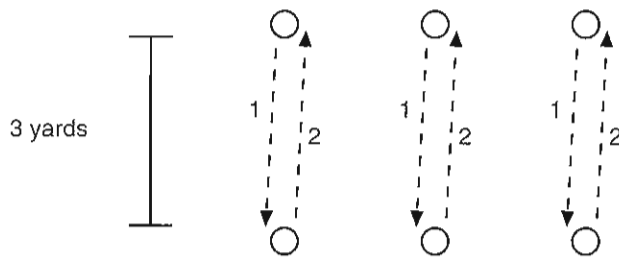
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Skill Practice (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *throw the football* (see page 120).
2. Have players practice throwing.

Description

Players in pairs play catch, standing about 3 yards apart. Have them hold the ball high for good rotation and release.



COACH's cues



"Spread your fingers on the ball."
"Hold the ball behind your ear."
"Snap your wrist!"

Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will move the ball downfield and score.

Description

Repeat game 1.

COACH's points

👉 Learning the basic throwing motion is important for success in flag football and many other sports.

👉 Go over passing rules (see page 131).

Practice 1

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Conclude practice by gathering your players and discussing a character development concept. These aren't lectures; you want your players' active participation in these discussions. Following the discussions, wrap up the practice with a few comments.

Key Idea: Four core values

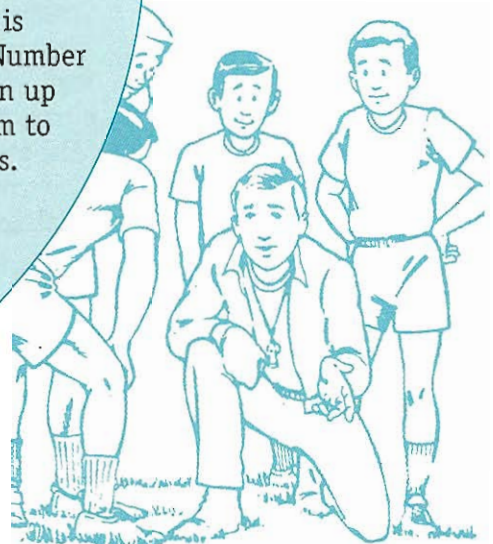
Gather the children into a circle. "This season we'll talk about four qualities of a good person and teammate. Number one is caring. Can you tell me ways you show caring to others? Helping someone up when they fall? Good! Number two is honesty. What ways do you show honesty? How about if you tell someone if you broke something? That's honesty. Number three is respect. Do you know what respect is? One thing that shows respect is listening to adults when they speak to you, like you're doing now. Number four is responsibility. One way to show you're responsible is to clean up after yourself. Don't wait for others to clean up for you." Ask them to share ways they show the four values in other areas of their lives.

"Good teammates show these values to each other. We'll talk more about these four values during the season."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.

Remind players of the next practice day and time.





Practice 2

PURPOSE

To learn basic offensive skills

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players jog one lap around the field and then come back and get into a circle. Lead them in five jumping jacks and stretches for their legs and arms.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: General fitness

Equipment: Bicycle pump (optional)

Gather the children into a group. "Your heart has the job of pushing blood all around your body. To do that, it must pump the blood through tubes called blood vessels." (The children may call these tubes veins, although technically they are arteries and veins.) "What is a pump?" (You may get blank stares.) "Can you give me an example of a pump?" [Gasoline pump, bicycle pump, basketball/football pump.] "What do pumps pump?" [Air, gasoline, or blood!]

If you have a bicycle pump, demonstrate how it works to the children. Explain that instead of pumping air, your heart pumps blood.

Activity: Heart pump

Have the children jump up and down as they say this rhyme:

Jump, jump hearts pump

Pump, pump all jump

All jump pump, pump

Hearts pump jump, jump.

"Have you ever felt your heart pumping?" (Some may say that after running they feel their hearts beating in their heads or see their chests moving.)

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will move the ball downfield and score.

Description

Play two simultaneous 3 v 3 games. On defense, play player-to-player. The offense starts at midfield and moves downfield in a nonstop passing game—no huddles, no plays, just receivers moving downfield and catching the ball. They are down where they catch it—and the receiver

Practice 2

who caught the ball becomes the quarterback, as his or her two teammates immediately go out for passes farther down the field. The defense becomes the offense on an interception or incomplete pass—otherwise the offense keeps moving down the field until they score, so long as they keep completing passes. (You may want to allow the offense to have three incomplete passes before the ball changes hands; keep the game moving, but don't make it too confusing for the players.) Give one point for each completed pass and six points for each touchdown.

Coach: What were you trying to do?

Players: Complete passes and move downfield to score.

Coach: How do we keep the ball moving downfield?

Player: By making good passes and good catches.



Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

Put players in groups of two and have them play catch 3 to 5 yards apart. Increase the distance as they increase their skill. Make sure they have a good release and hold the ball high. (See the diagram on page 120.)



"Hold the ball tight!"

"Keep your weight on the back foot."

"Follow through with your arm across your body."

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

Divide players into groups of twos. Give each pair a football. Instruct them to throw 10 balls from a sitting position to each other. This drill is used for developing arm strength, wrist snap, and accuracy. Start out at 3 yards apart and work up to 5 yards apart.

Practice 2

(cont'd)

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will get open, receive passes, move downfield, and score.

Description

Repeat game 1.



☞ Try not to get caught up in the details of throwing the football. More will come later, as players become developmentally ready.

☞ Go over receiving rules (see page 131).



Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a group. "I want us all to pretend we're eggs. Eggs have shells that can break. What would happen if we bumped into each other as eggs? Right. We would crack and break. Let's move around the field being eggs. Don't bump each other or we'll break!" Continue for about one minute. "We were all careful not to bump each other so that our shells wouldn't break! That was great! You were in charge of, or responsible for, your moving. When we're careful of each other, we're responsible for our space and other players' space. This shows responsibility during practice and games."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next practice day and time.

Practice 3

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players jog for 3 minutes and then get into a circle. Lead them in five push-ups and jumping jacks.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: General fitness

Gather the children into a group. "We all have lungs. Your lungs, like your heart, are in your chest and you can't see them. Unlike your heart, you have two lungs—one on your left side and one on your right side. Your lungs hide right behind your ribs. Where are your ribs? You can feel your ribs on the sides of your chest.

"Your lungs have the job of getting air in and out of your body. Take a deep breath. Look at your chest when you do this. When you breathe in, your lungs fill up with air and your chest lifts up and gets bigger. That is so air can get into your lungs. Now blow the air out. When you do that, your chest gets smaller."

Activity: Deep breathing

"Lie flat on your back. Place your right hand on your abdomen (belly) just below your ribs. Place your left hand on the center of your chest.

Take a really deep breath. Breathe in through your nose *and* mouth. When you do this, push your chest outward and upward.

Your belly will rise as well. Hold your breath. Let the air out of your lungs by opening your mouth and pulling your abdomen inward. Do this several times.

What do you notice?" [Chest gets bigger, I am able to control my breathing, it relaxes me.]

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Receivers will run routes and get open to receive passes.

Description

Split the players into four teams, two Team As and two Team Bs, on two different parts of the field. Team As begin and remain on offense for the first half of the game; Team Bs are on offense for the second half of the game. The two Team As begin at midfield and move toward opposite goals. On defense, play either zone (one player covers left, one middle,

PURPOSE

To learn a pass pattern

Equipment



One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)



Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards

Practice 3

(cont'd)



- and one right) or player-to-player (with one player assigned to the
- quarterback). Receivers are to run however they want in attempting to
- get open and receive a pass. Rotate offensive players to different posi-
- tions after each play. The receiver is down where he or she caught the
- ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the
- defenders to touch them with one hand to down them). Award one
- point for each pass caught.

Coach: How should you hold your hands when catching a ball below the waist?

Players: Put your little fingers together.

Coach: How about above the waist?

Players: Put your thumbs together.

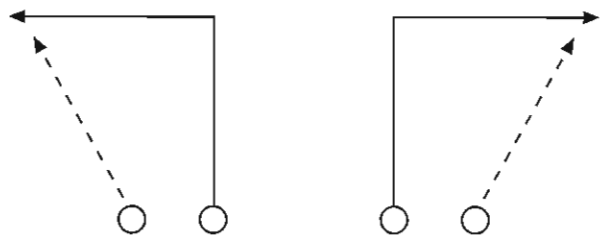
Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *catch the football* (see page 121).
2. Have players practice catching the football in a stationary position.

Description

Pair up players, with each pair having a ball. They play catch, with the throws going to different locations, as called out by you: above the head; below the waist; to the side. (If they aren't able to hit these locations, that's okay; the main point is to practice catching.)

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)



1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to catch the football on the run, using the *square-out pass pattern* (see page 117).
2. Have players practice catching the football using the square-out pass pattern.

Description

Pair up players, with each pair having a ball. The pairs of players then throw each other passes using the square-out pattern.

COACH'S cues



"Be soft all over."

"Look the ball into your hands."

"Catch the ball with your hands, not with your body."

Practice 3

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will catch the ball while running the square-out pass pattern.

Description

Repeat Game 1, with the receivers running square-outs.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a group. Dump five to six balls out of a mesh ball bag, leaving them where they stop. "Pretend we just finished one activity in practice and we're getting ready to do something else. Everyone walk away from the balls and make a group circle." Pick up the balls, then go to the group. Dump balls out again. "Now come back and you pick up the balls, then go make a circle. Which way makes it faster for me to get to your circle?" Listen to their responses. "What do you think we should do with the balls?" Listen to their responses. Discuss picking up equipment before doing another activity. "We can have more fun and learn more when we work together. That is a shared responsibility between the coach and the players."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next practice day and time.

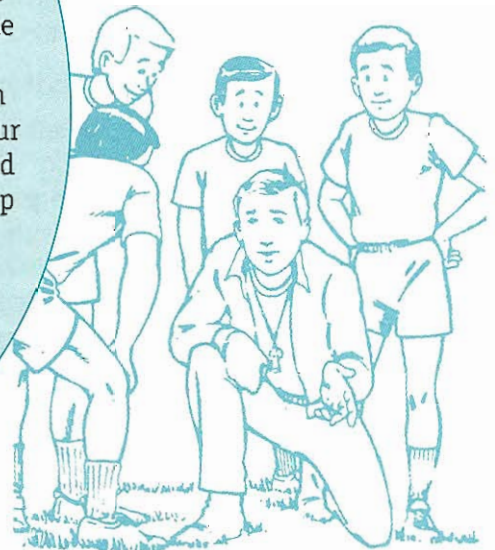
Variations

Make the games and skill practices easier or harder for the kids by adjusting the difficulty of the passes or the length of the patterns.



☞ Correct hand position and remembering the coach's cues are keys to good pass receiving.

☞ Go over the no-block rule (see page 132).





Practice 4

PURPOSE

To set up the offensive attack

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players jog one lap around the field. Lead them in push-ups and jumping jacks. Then pair them up and have them pass to each other.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory health and fitness

Equipment: Two cones

Gather the children into a group. "People who play football, run, or swim have hearts and lungs that work really well. That is because our bodies were made to be exercised every day. People who live in some countries have to exercise hard every day just to find or get food. Have you ever heard of people who need to work hard to get food?"

Activity: Running plus breathing and heart rate

"When I tell you to, I want you to run as fast as you can to the cone and back." (The cone is to be placed 50 yards from where you are speaking.) "Do you understand? Ready? Go!" (As the children run, encourage them to run as fast as they can.)

When the children return, tell them, "Think about your heart and lungs. Can you feel your heart pumping faster?" (Some will, some won't.) "Are you breathing faster?" (Some will be able to answer, others will not.) "When your heart beats faster and your lungs breathe deeper and faster, that is a sign that your heart and lungs are getting more exercise. If you do this day after day, your heart and lungs will get stronger."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

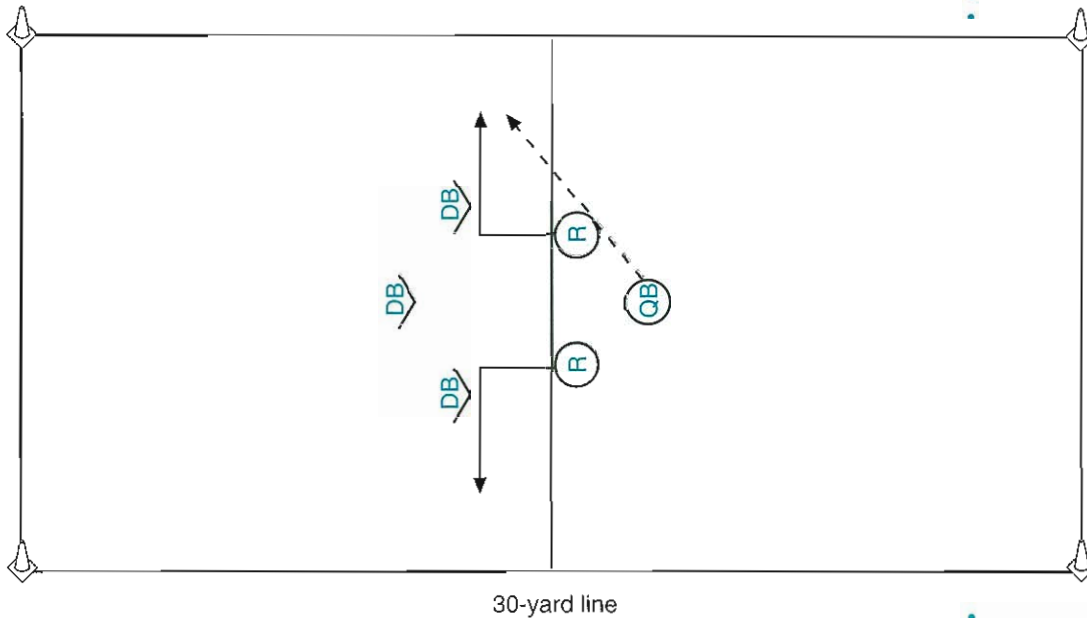
Players will catch passes while running square-outs.

Description

Play games of 3 v 3. On defense, play either zone (one player covers left, one middle, and one right) or player-to-player (with one player assigned to the quarterback). Have receivers run square-outs. The offense starts 30 yards away from the goal and has six passes to at-

Practice 4

tempt to score. Each completion is worth one point; a touchdown is worth six. Switch offense and defense after a touchdown or after six passes, whichever comes first. The offense always begins 30 yards from the goal. The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to touch them with one hand to down them).



Coach: How should you hold your hands when catching a ball below the waist?

Players: Put your little fingers together.

Coach: How about above the waist?

Players: Put your thumbs together.

Coach: What's another way to get open besides the square-out pattern?

Players: The curl pattern.

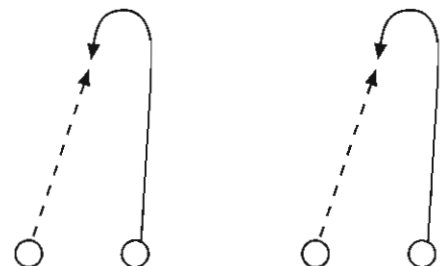


Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to catch the football on the run, using the *curl pass pattern* (see page 117).
2. Have players practice catching the football using the curl pass pattern.

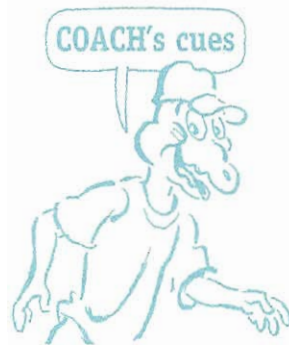
Description

Divide players into pairs, each pair with one football. One player runs a curl pattern while his or her partner throws a pass. Have receivers run five curls then switch roles so that their partners can run curls.



Practice 4

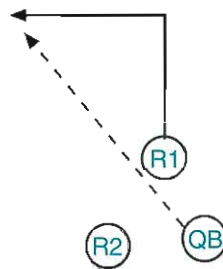
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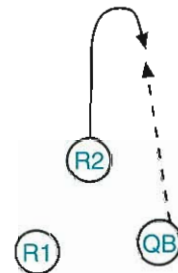
"Curl back!"
"Proper hand position."
"Tuck the ball away."

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

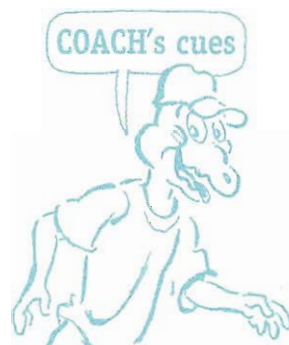
Review the proper technique for catching the football on the run. Divide players into teams of three—one quarterback and two receivers. Have quarterbacks throw passes to the players running curls and square-outs (you call out the pattern). One receiver per team goes out at a time; on the next pass, the other receiver goes out. After each receiver has gone out three times, rotate positions so that the quarterback becomes a receiver. Check to see if the players are using the correct hand position on each catch.



First pass



Second pass



"Soft hands!"
"Look the ball into your hands."
"Use your hands to catch, not your body."

Practice 4

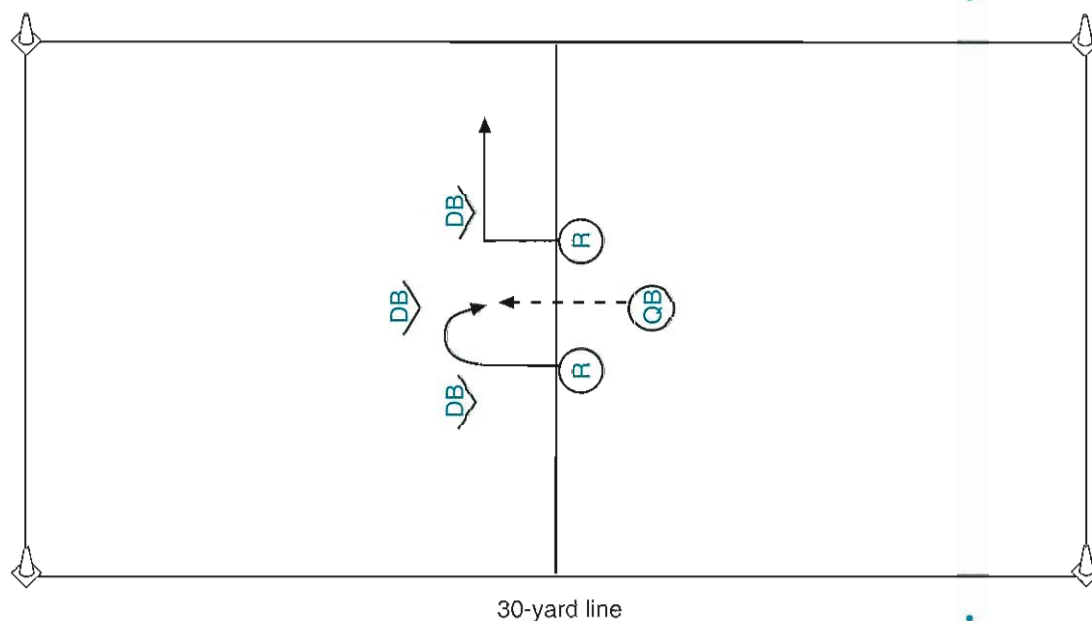
Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will catch the ball while running the correct pass pattern.

Description

Repeat game 1, with you calling out the pass patterns—square-outs and curls.



COACH'S points

☞ Keeping your eyes on the ball and being soft are keys to good pass receiving.

☞ Go over defensive rules (see page 132).

Practice 4

(cont'd)

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Honesty

Gather children into a group. "Can you interfere with pass receivers in flag football? Even if it's an accident? Those of you who think it's okay to commit pass interference, stand to my left. Those who think it's not okay, stand to my right." Wait for children to choose. Then ask them why they chose as they did. "Pass interference, even if it's an accident, is a violation. What should you do if that happens? Those of you who think you should just keep playing, stand to my left; those of you who think you should raise your hand or tell the official, stand to my right." Wait for everyone to finish choosing. "It's important to be honest about committing violations. If you commit pass interference or some other violation, even if nobody sees it, raise your hand or tell the official."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next practice day and time.



Practice 5

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players run for 2 minutes and then split up into groups of three (quarterback, receiver, defensive back) and play catch, running pass patterns against the defender. Players should rotate so that they play each position.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscle fitness (strength)

Gather the children into a group. "Watch my arm as I make a muscle." (Flex your biceps muscle.) "Now you try it. This is only one of over 600 muscles that you have in your body. These muscles help you walk, play the piano, and do sports. If you didn't have muscles, your bones would fall to the floor. Your muscles get stronger (and sometimes bigger) when you exercise them. Usually bigger muscles mean that you are stronger."

Activity: Push-up

"Here is an exercise that will make your arms stronger. The muscles in your arms need to be developed to play football well. This exercise is called a push-up. Lie on your stomach. Place your hands to the outside of your shoulders with your fingers pointing straight ahead. Push your upper body off the floor, keeping your knees on the floor. You should form a straight line from your head to your knees when you are in this push-up position. Lower your body until your chest almost touches the floor." [Children may try a full push-up (no knee support) if they wish.]

"What muscles does this exercise make stronger?"

[The muscles on the backs of the arms.] "Now

show me another exercise you know."

[Variety demonstrated.]

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Defenders will pull the offensive player's flag in game situations.

Description

Play two 3 v 3 games simultaneously or one 6 v 6 game. Play either zone or player-to-player (with one player assigned to the quarterback). Call out the routes that receivers should run. Defenders must pull the



PURPOSE

To stop offensive progress

Equipment



One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)



Towels or cones to mark zones



A flag belt (with flags) for each player

Practice 5

(cont'd)

- flag to stop the ball carrier's progress. (If this proves too advanced, use
- a one-hand tag to down ball carriers.) Start the offense at one goal line
- and see how far they can advance down the field in six plays. Then
- switch sides. The new offense begins at a goal line and tries to advance
- farther down the field than the first offense did.



Coach: What was the goal of the game?

Players: To pull the flag.

Coach: What's the best way to pull the flag?

Players: Try to grab it.

Coach: Should you lunge for the runner or let the runner come to you?

Players: Wait for the runner to come to you.

Coach: Should you keep your weight back, on the balls of your feet (indicate what these are), or should you get up on your toes?

Players: Keep your weight on the balls of your feet.

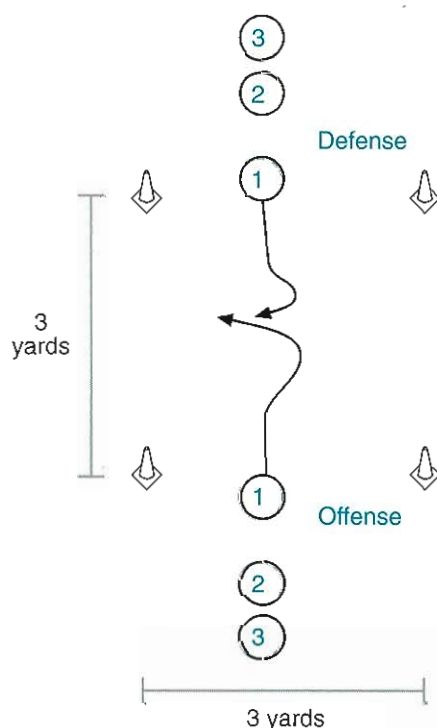
Coach: Good. Let's practice pulling flags.

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *pull the flag* (see page 123).
2. Have players practice pulling flags.

Description

Divide the players into two groups. Within each group, have a line of offensive players and a line of defensive players (three players per line). Mark a zone 3 yards wide by 3 yards long. Have an offensive player run through the zone while a defensive player attempts to pull his or her flag. Those two players then go to the ends of their lines. When each defensive player has had three attempts to pull a flag, switch the offense and defense and continue the skill practice.



COACH's cues



"Keep your feet shoulder-width apart."

"Keep a low center of gravity."

"Wait for the runner to come to you."

Practice 5

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat skill practice 1, but this time the defensive player begins on his or her back. Toss the ball to the offensive player. With the toss, the defender gets up and attempts to pull the flag off the offensive player before he or she can run through the zone.

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

The offense will make first downs and touchdowns and the defense will stop offensive progress.

Description

Play 6 v 6, with the players putting into play all the skills that they have been taught. Play either zone or player-to-player defense (with one player assigned to the quarterback). Give the offense two points for each first down and six points for each score. The defense must pull the flag to stop the ball carrier. Give the defense two points for each incomplete pass *if it is touched by a defender* and three points for an interception.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather children into a single-file line. "I am going to walk down the line two times. Remember how it feels each time I pass you." Walk down the line and nod to each player. Repeat, but this time tell each player "great game" or "nice play today" and shake his or her hand. "Which time that I passed you made you feel better? Shaking hands and saying 'good game' are important traditions that show we appreciate our opponents' efforts in a game. It shows respect for your opponents." Divide the team in half and have players practice an end-of-game "respect ritual."

Wrap-Up

Remind players of the next practice day and time.



Go over the flag-guarding rule (see page 133).

Flag pulling may prove to be too difficult for youngsters this age. If so, revert back to one-hand (or two-hand) touches to down ball carriers.






Practice 6

PURPOSE

To learn a new pass pattern

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards
-  A flag belt (with flags) for each player

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

- Have the players jog one lap around the field. Choose two quarterbacks to throw to receivers running square-outs and curls. Correct the players when the right pattern is not executed.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Muscle fitness

Gather the children into a group. "Flexibility means how far you can stretch a muscle or how much you can move a joint. What is a joint?" [Where two bones meet.] "If you have good flexibility, there is a better chance you will not hurt your muscles when exercising or doing chores. Good flexibility also helps you do better at sports and playing games. Football players especially need a lot of flexibility to prevent injuries."

Activity: Flexibility

"Today we are going to be rubber-band boys and girls. Reach down your back with one hand and reach up your back with your other hand. Try to touch your fingers. If you can do that, you have flexible arms and shoulders.

"Sit on the floor and put your legs straight in front of you. Bend forward at your waist. How close can you get your face (or forehead) to your knees? If you can almost reach your knees, you have good leg and maybe back flexibility.

"Your muscles must be strong and flexible. That means you can stretch far without hurting yourself. I want to see how flexible you really are. Can you kiss your elbow? Try it." (They will not be able to do so, but they will have fun trying.)

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

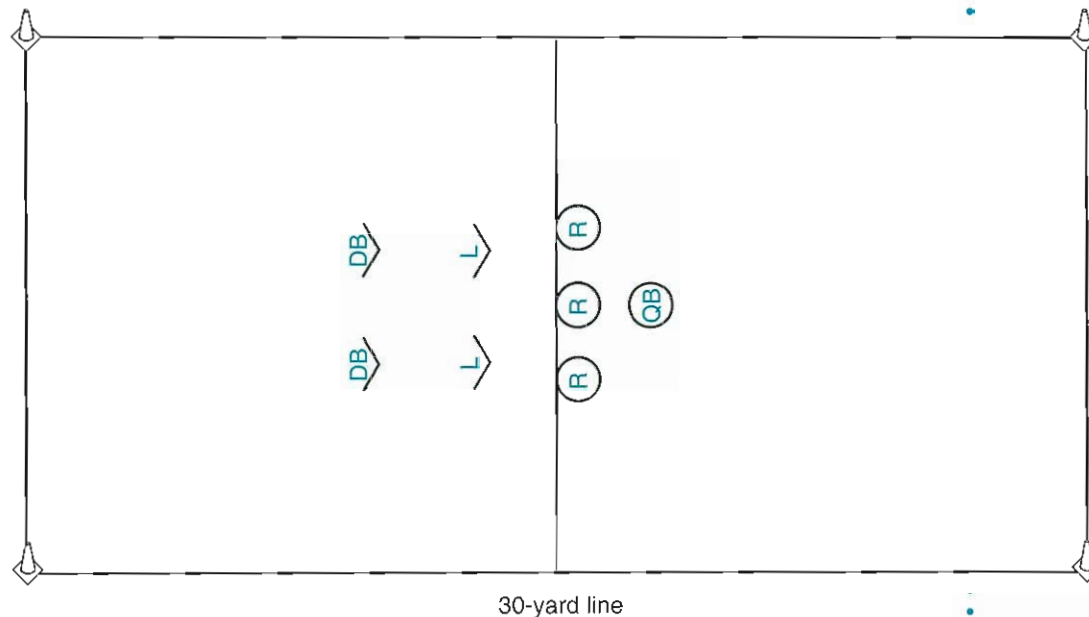
- Receivers will run routes against defenders and get open to receive passes.

Description

- Play 4 v 4; one quarterback and three receivers on offense and four defenders on defense. Rotate teams from offense to defense every three plays. The offense will run "hot" (full speed). The defense will run

Practice 6

"cold" (half-speed), playing a zone—two players up front, two playing deep—allowing the offense to catch the ball when patterns are run correctly. The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to either touch them with one hand to down them or practice pulling flags). Receivers should run however they want to in attempting to get open and receive a pass. Count one point for each pass caught.



Coach: What was the goal of the game?

Players: To run and get open and catch passes.

Coach: How do you get open?

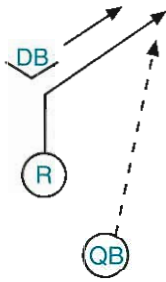
Players: By running different patterns.

Coach: Let's try a pattern called "the slant."



Practice 6

(cont'd)



Skill Practice (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain the *slant pattern* (see page 117).
2. Have players practice running the slant pattern.

Description

Split your squad into three-player groups. In each group, there's a quarterback, a receiver, and a defensive back. The receivers run slant patterns and attempt to catch passes. Rotate positions after a receiver has run the route three times.

COACH'S cues



- "Change your speed."
- "Change your direction."
- "Make good fakes and sharp cuts."

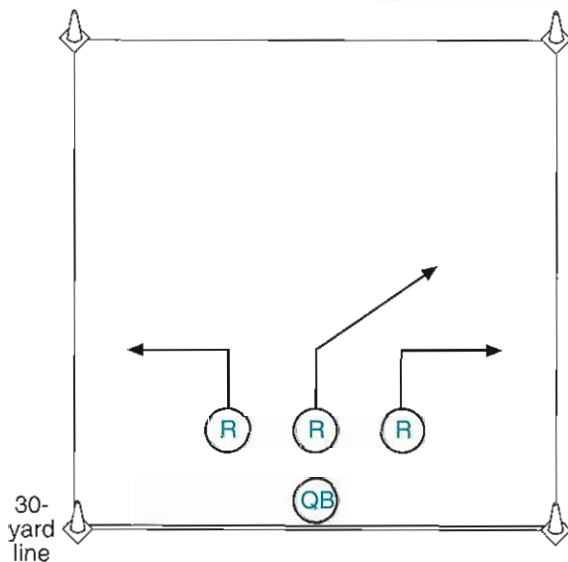
Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will run pass patterns, move the ball downfield, and score.

Description

Split your squad into three or four teams and place the teams on different quadrants of the field. Each team is on offense; there is no defense. Teams will begin at midfield and work their way downfield by completing passes. Tell wide receivers (the ones on either side of the ball, farthest from the ball) to run square-outs; the others can run either a curl or a slant. The ball is down where caught. Award one point for each completed pass and two points for each touchdown. After each play, rotate players so that someone else plays quarterback.



Practice 6

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

Gather children into a circle. Stand in the middle of the group with a ball. Pass to each child and give them a turn to pass back to you. "I am going to pass the ball. If a pass comes to you, pass the ball back to me." Work around the whole circle. Talk to the children about playing and learning when they come to practice. "Who had a turn to touch the ball?" Wait for their responses. "I made sure everyone had a chance to touch the ball. Raise your hand if it felt good to be able to have a turn. How would you have felt if you did not have a turn?" Listen to their responses. "We need to share the ball and take turns playing different positions so that everyone can learn and play. Sharing and taking turns shows you care."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next practice day and time.



Variation

To make the games harder, play defense against the offense in game 2.



👉 Being able to get open is a key to good pass receiving.




👉 Go over running rules (see page 131).

Practice 7

PURPOSE

To run effective pass patterns and get open

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards
-  A flag belt (with flags) for each player

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players run for 2 minutes. Have the kids throw passes to each other, taking turns being quarterbacks and receivers.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather the children into a group. "What do people like football players, runners, and gymnasts do before they play their sports or run races?" [They stretch, warm up, do these kinds of exercises . . .] "Getting ready to exercise is sometimes called warming up. Warming up helps prevent injuries, gets athletes thinking about their sports, and helps get their hearts and lungs ready for exercise. What exercises do football players do before playing?" [Stretching, running, catching punts, kicking balls, throwing and catching balls, practicing blocking.]

Activity: Warm-up exercises

"Here are some getting-ready exercises for flag football" (see pages 140-141).

Game 1 (20 minutes)

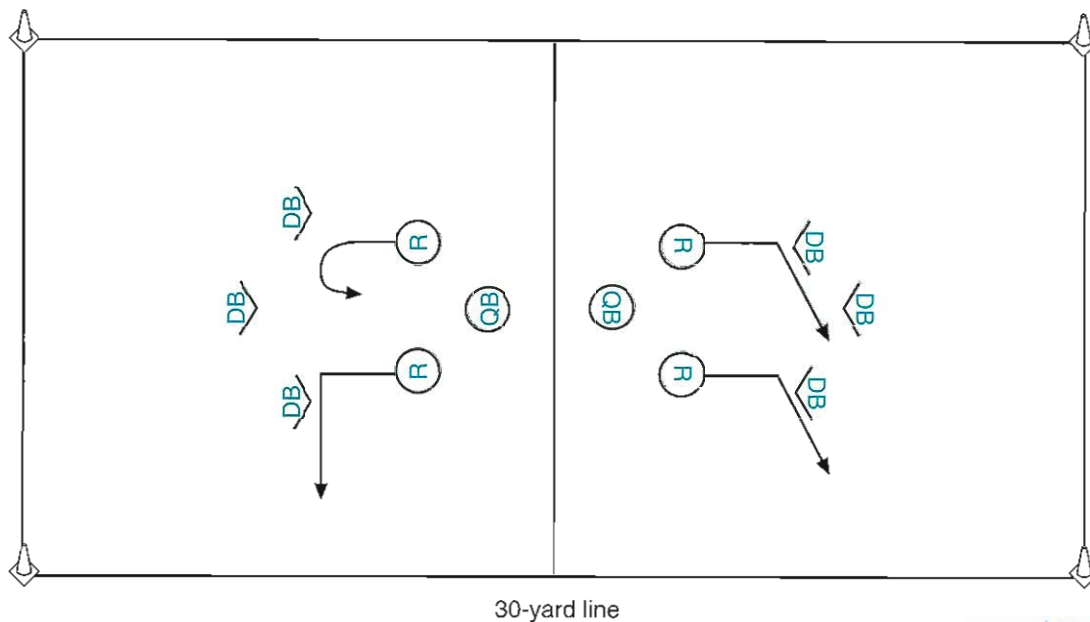
Goal

Players will run routes that will get them open.

Description

Play two simultaneous 3 v 3 games. Have receivers run various routes against defenders with you telling the offense (so the defense doesn't hear) the routes. On defense, play either zone (one player covers left, one middle, and one right) or player-to-player. Have the offense remain on offense for 5 minutes, then switch offense and defense. Give two points when the intended receiver runs his or her route correctly, and add a point if the receiver makes the catch. The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to either touch them with one hand to down them or to practice pulling flags).

Practice 1



Coach: What was the goal of the game?

Players: To get open to catch a pass.

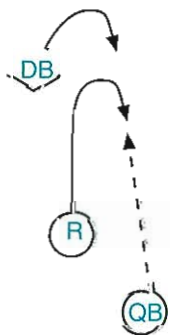
Coach: How can you get open to catch a pass?

Players: By running specific patterns.

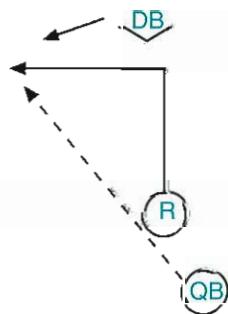


Skill Practice (10 minutes)

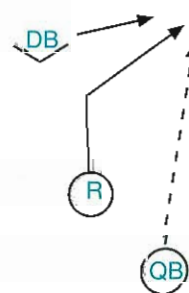
Split your squad into three-player groups. In each group, there's a quarterback, a receiver, and a defensive back. The same receiver runs each of three routes—the curl, the square-out, and the slant—and attempts to catch passes. Rotate positions after a receiver has run all three routes.



Play 1



Play 2



Play 3

Practice 7

(cont'd)

COACH'S cues



"Run an exact pattern!"

"Change your speed and direction."

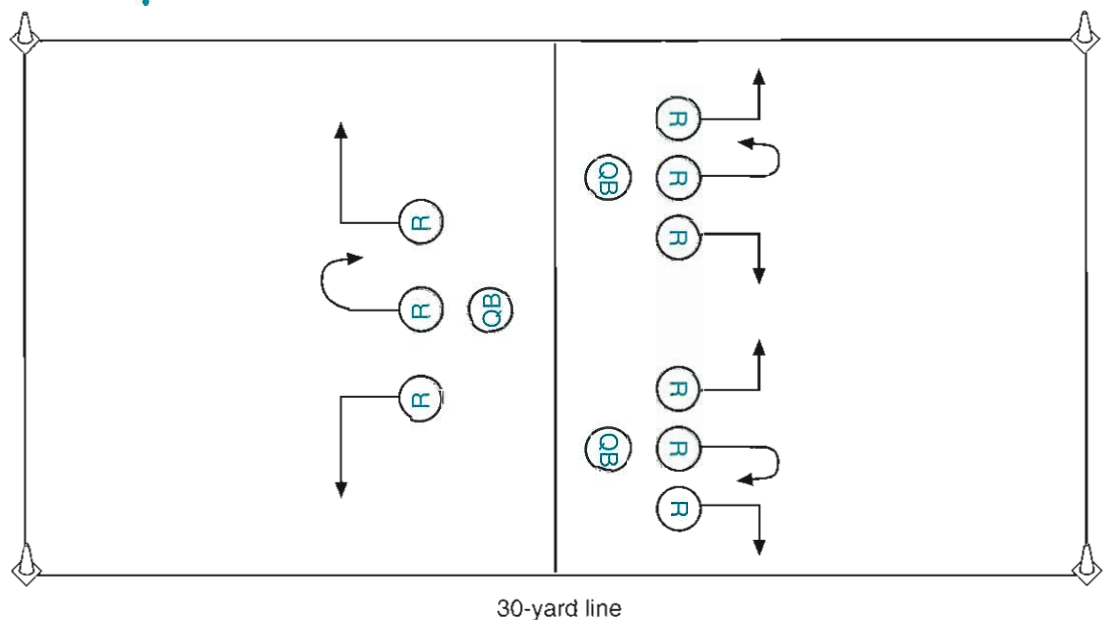
Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Receivers will run correct routes and make catches.

Description

Divide the players into three teams of four and have the quarterbacks throw to the receivers with no defense. Place the teams in different quadrants of the field, all starting at midfield (two teams will be going the same direction down the field). Have the two outside receivers run square-outs and the inside receiver run a curl. Award a point to each receiver who runs the correct pattern and a point for each catch made.



Practice 1

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Caring

Gather the children into a group. "Let's pretend we're playing a flag football game. Watch what I do with the ball." Tell a child in the group that you're passing to him. Make a bad pass. "That pass wasn't very good, was it? What would you say to me so that I don't feel bad about the pass?" As children respond, have each player who makes a supportive comment stand beside you. If players make comments that aren't supportive, encourage them to change their words to become more supportive; after they have changed the words, they join their teammates beside you. "It's very important to support your teammates, especially when they make mistakes. Saying something that makes someone feel good shows you care."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next practice day and time.



👉 Playing smart is a large part of being a good pass receiver.




👉 Go over the offsides rule (see page 132).

Practice 8

PURPOSE

To learn a new pass pattern

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards
-  A flag belt (with flags) for each player

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players jog one lap around the field and then come back and run the pass patterns they have learned. Correct the players when their hand positions or routes are not done correctly. Lead them in stretches for their legs and arms.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Safety

Gather the children into a group. "A room has four walls, a floor, and a ceiling. Between the walls, ceiling, and floor is called 'space.' You have space, too. It is called personal space. If we all started playing football or doing exercises right now, some of us might bump into each other and get hurt. If you spread out, each of you would have enough personal space, or space you have to share with everyone else."

Activity: Finding your personal space

"Now let's see what personal space is. Put your arms out to your sides as far as possible. Now stretch them upward, backward, and in front of you as far as possible. That is your personal space. That is because you can swing your arms without hitting anyone."

"Now let's walk around the field without bumping into anyone. Let's run without running into anyone. Now swing your arms without running into anyone. You have learned what personal space is. When I say, 'Watch your personal space,' that means don't run into anyone."

Practice 8

Game 1 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will run good pass routes.

Description

Play two 3 v 3 games. Have receivers run various routes against defenders with you telling the offense (so that the defense doesn't hear) the routes. On defense, play either zone (one player covers left, one middle, and one right) or player-to-player. Have the offense remain on offense for five plays, then switch offense and defense. Continue to rotate in this fashion. Give two points per catch—if the route was run correctly. The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to either touch them with one hand to down them or practice pulling flags).

Coach: What was the goal of the game?

Players: To run correct pass routes.

Coach: Why is it important to run the correct route?

Players: So the quarterback knows where to look for receivers.

Coach: We've learned curls, square-outs, and slants. What's another way you can get open?

Players: The streak pattern.

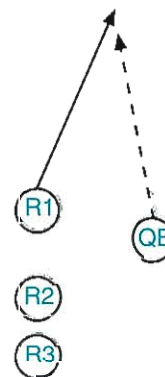


Skill Practice (15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain the *streak pattern* (see page 117).
2. Have players practice running the streak pattern.

Description

Split your squad into four-player groups. In each group, there's a quarterback and three receivers, lined up so that one receiver at a time will go out. Have two footballs available for each quarterback. The receivers run streak patterns and attempt to catch passes. After the three receivers have gone out for a pass, one of them becomes the quarterback, and the quarterback becomes a receiver as the skill practice continues.



Practice 8

(cont'd)

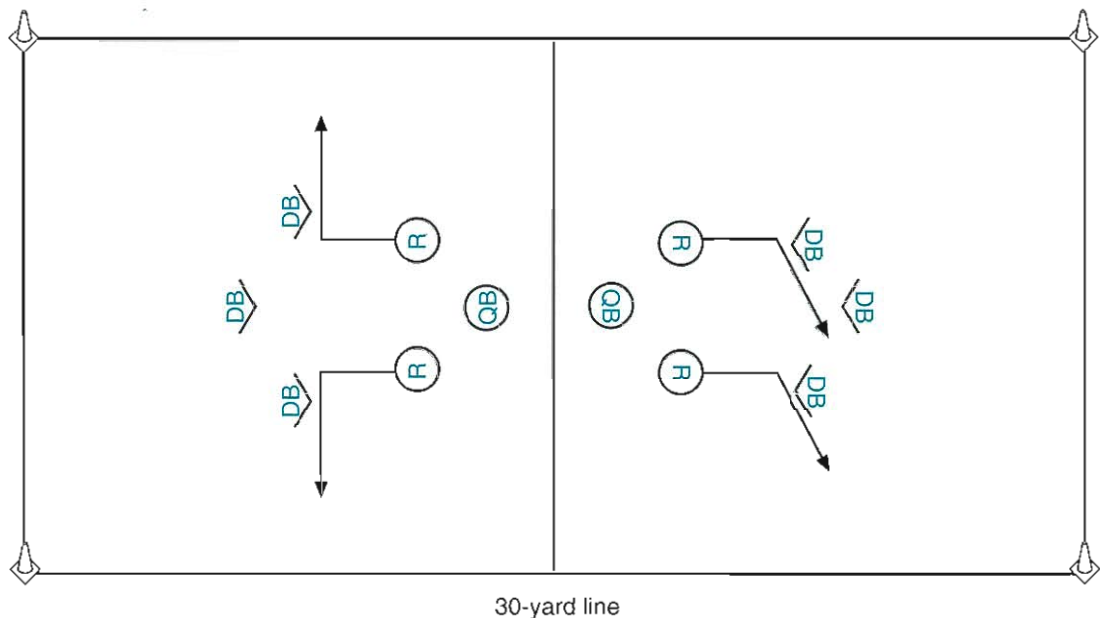
Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will run various patterns and get open to catch passes.

Description

Play two simultaneous 3 v 3 games. Call the pattern before each play (streak, slant, square-out, or curl). The defense should play a "cold" defense, playing either zone (one player covers left, one middle, and one right) or player-to-player. The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to either touch them with one hand to down them or practice pulling flags). The offense will receive a point when the receiver who is passed to runs the right route and another point if that receiver makes a catch.



Everyone must know the patterns and run routes precisely so that the quarterback can find and throw to an open receiver.

Go over the pass interference rule (see page 132).



"Make cuts believable."
"Run your route!"

Practice 8

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather the children. Have all the balls nearby. Privately tell two children that you are going to ask them to help pick up the balls and you want them to ignore your request. Then ask two other children to begin picking up balls and putting them in the ball bag or bringing them over to you. Then ask the two children that you've alerted to ignore you to help pick up. Then ask the group which kids were being responsible, the first pair or the second pair. Let the kids know you instructed the second pair not to help out. "When you listen to me and help out, you're being responsible to me and to your teammates. A big part of being on a team is being responsible by listening and pitching in."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next
practice day and time.






Practice 9

PURPOSE

To run effective pass patterns and get open

Equipment

-  One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
-  Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards
-  A flag belt (with flags) for each player

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the player jog for two minutes. Then have them pair up and play catch, running the pass patterns they learned in previous practices.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits

Equipment: Footballs (one for every four children), two different-colored hoops for each team of four. (If possible, each child would have a football and two colored hoops.)

Gather the children into a group. "When you exercise and it is hot, you may sweat too much. When that happens, you lose a lot of water. That means you have to put water or liquid back inside of you. What do you usually drink when you are thirsty?" [Soda pop, water, milk, juice, fruit drinks.] "It is best when you have sweat a lot to drink water. That is the easiest and least expensive thing to drink. When you need something that gives you vitamins and minerals and powers you up, drink milk and fruit juices and not soda pop. Soda pop has lots of sugar and no vitamins or minerals."

Activity: Football beverage toss

Divide the children into teams of four. In front of each team, place a yellow hoop (representing water) and a red hoop (representing soda pop); other colors will do. Tell the children their job when they step to the front of the line is to toss the football into the yellow hoop (or water)—the preferred drink. If all four children do this, their team wins—all teams can be winners. If the ball lands in a red hoop or doesn't get into the yellow hoop, the child gets to toss the ball again.

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will get open using various pass routes.

Description

Play two 3 v 3 games. Have receivers run various routes against defenders with you telling the offense (so that the defense doesn't hear) the routes. On defense, play either zone (one player covers left, one middle, and one right) or player-to-player. Have the offense remain on offense

Practice 9

for five plays, then switch offense and defense. Continue to rotate in this fashion. Give two points per catch—if the route was run correctly. The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to either touch them with one hand to down them or practice pulling flags).

Coach: What was the goal of the game?

Players: To run correct pass routes.

Coach: Why is it important to run the correct route?

Players: Because the quarterback must know where everyone is on the field to be able to complete the pass.

Skill Practice (15 minutes)

Split your squad into four-player groups. In each group, there's a quarterback and three receivers, lined up so that one receiver at a time will go out. Have two footballs available for each quarterback. You call the pass pattern for each receiver. After the three receivers have gone out for a pass, one of them becomes the quarterback, and the quarterback becomes a receiver as the skill practice continues.

COACH'S cues



"Run your route."

"Good fakes and sharp cuts!"

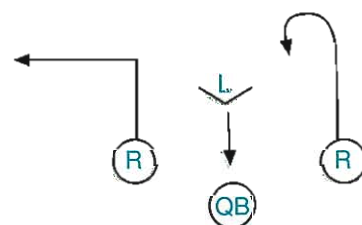
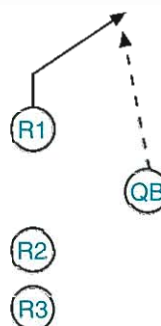
Game 2 (15 minutes)

Goal

Players will correctly run routes with pressure on the quarterback.

Description

Divide the team into three groups, each with a quarterback, two receivers, and a rusher. All three groups run the play at the same time. You call out the routes for the receivers and the quarterbacks throw to one of the receivers. The rushers put pressure on the quarterbacks after a 5-second count (given by you or your assistant). Rotate players—the receiver who was thrown the pass becomes the rusher; the rusher becomes the quarterback; the other receiver remains a receiver until he or she is thrown a pass.



Practice 9

(cont'd)



☞ Running correct routes will spread the field and make it easy for the quarterback to find the open receiver. Receivers need to run their routes quickly so that the quarterback can get rid of the ball before being tagged by the defense.

☞ Go over the illegal rushing rule (see page 132).



Variation

To make game 2 harder, cut out one receiver and add a defensive back (so that you have a quarterback and receiver against a rusher and a defensive back). But use caution in making the game too competitive too early, because the players may forget about learning the skill and just worry about scoring.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a circle. Stand in the center of the circle with a ball. Ask children to call to you and raise their hand if they are in a good position for a pass. Run with the ball inside the circle, but do not pass to anyone. Continue for about 1 minute. "Did I share the ball with anyone?" Wait for their responses. "Do you think that is good teamwork? What *is* good teamwork?" Listen to their responses. Repeat the activity, but this time pass to players who call and raise their hand. "Teamwork is when all players are working together, not just keeping the ball to themselves. Responsible team members get in position to receive a good pass. They don't always pass to the same person. And they always work hard."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice.
Remind players of the next practice day and time.

Practice 10

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have the players jog one lap around the field and then come back and run pass patterns. Lead them in jumping jacks and stretches for their legs and arms.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Healthy habits (snacks)

Gather the children into a group. "A snack is any food you eat between meals. Snacks include such things as an apple, a cookie, or chips. Any food (a bowl of cereal or a sandwich) eaten between meals is a snack. There are good and bad snacks. 'Good' snacks are nutritious and make you healthy and strong. Any food can be bad if you eat it too close to meal time and then you don't eat much for dinner. To snack right, do the following:

- Snack two hours or more before a meal.
- Eat small snacks and make sure you have room for dinner.
- Snack only when hungry.
- Choose snacks that are good for you."

Activity: Favorite foods

"When I say a food, tell me if you like it by jumping up and down. If you don't like the food, make a frown. If you think the food is good for you, run in place."

Donuts	Chocolate cake
Peanuts	Milk
Peaches	Apple juice
String beans	Fish
French fries	Chicken

PURPOSE

To cover pass receivers

Equipment

- ☒ One football for every two players (Nerf ball or youth-size: 10 1/4- to 10 1/2-inch)
- ☒ Grass field 30 yards by 60 yards
- ☒ A flag belt (with flags) for each player

Practice 10

(cont'd)

Game 1 (10 minutes)

Goal

Players will cover pass receivers and prevent them from catching passes.

Description

Play 2 v 2 games on different quadrants of the field—a quarterback and a receiver against two defensive backs. The defense can put double coverage on the receiver or choose to rush a player. Each offense starts at midfield and works its way toward the goal line (two going one way, the other two going the other direction).

The offense gets six pass plays, then the teams rotate from offense to defense and vice versa. Call out pass routes for the offenses to run (call them out so that all four offenses can hear the play). The receiver is down where he or she caught the ball (you can opt to allow the receivers to run with the ball and the defenders to either touch them with one hand to down them or practice pulling flags). For each incomplete pass that falls to the ground untouched by the defense, give the defense one point.

For each incomplete pass that is touched by the defense, give two points. Give three points for an interception. Take away a point from the defense if a pass is caught.

Once the offense has had six plays, teams switch sides, and the new offenses begin at midfield.



Coach: What was the goal of the game?

Players: To cover the receivers.

Coach: How do you do that?

Players: By using good positioning and staying with the receiver.

Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *cover receivers* (see pages 124-125).
2. Have your players practice the proper footwork needed for covering receivers.

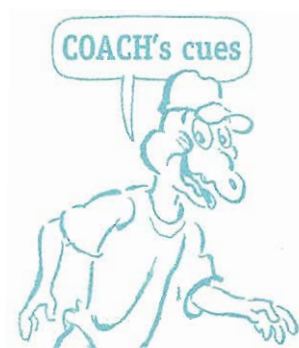
Description

Line players up and stand in front of them holding the football. Point to different directions on the field (back, forward, right, and left) and have the kids run with the proper footwork as they change direction.

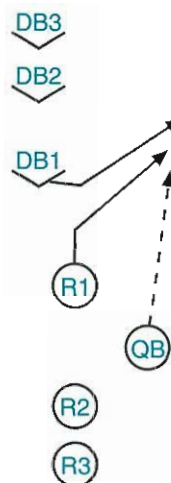
Practice 10

Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

Divide the players into two groups, each with one quarterback and two single-file lines: one of receivers, the other of defenders. Call out routes for pass receivers. Help defenders line up at the proper distance. They should use good footwork and cut to the ball at the right time.



"Stick with the receiver!"
"Look for the ball when the receiver looks for the ball."



Game 2 (10 minutes)

Goal

Defenders will not allow passes to be completed.

Description

Play 6 v 6, playing either a zone or player-to-player defense. If you play a zone, instruct the defense to have two players on the line and four players playing in a line straight across in the defensive backfield, each covering the area in front and behind them. The offense uses the pass routes that they have learned. Play a regulation game, with Team A beginning on offense at the 20-yard line and continuing on as long as they make first downs. Give one point for each first down and six points for a touchdown for the offense. For the defense, award one point for each incomplete pass that falls to the ground untouched by the defense; two points for each incomplete pass that is touched by the defense; and three points for each interception.



Defenders should keep receivers in front of them and never turn their backs on them.

Go over the defensive holding rule (see page 132).

Practice 10

(cont'd)



Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Keeping perspective

Gather the children into a group. "What did you most enjoy learning about in flag football this season?" Listen to their responses. "Players who thought they tried their best to learn, stand to my left. Players who think they had fun this season, stand to my right. Both of those are important. You should try your best and have fun no matter what happens during the season. The most important thing in flag football is to have fun playing with friends and to learn new skills. I think you all did that! Next year is another chance to have fun, learn new skills, and make new friends!"

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about what everyone learned over the season. Encourage players to come back next year!