

# Flag Football

## History and Fun Facts

When William Ebb Ellis, a student at Rugby School in England, broke all rules in 1823 and picked up the soccer ball and ran with it, British football was about to change from a form of the ancient Greek game known as *harpaston* to a modernized British version. Later in the 1800s, British football eventually became two games: rugby and soccer (soccer is known as *football* outside of the United States).

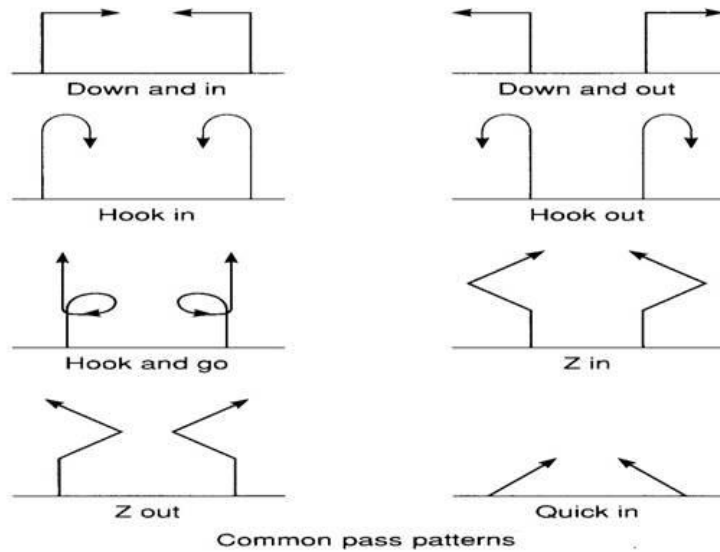
In America, a variety of rough games were played on college campuses, but it wasn't until after the Civil War when colleges, led by Princeton, began drawing up some basic rules and American football was developed and patented that football as we know it in America began to take shape.

In the United States, applying the name *football* to the game probably more refers to the unusual shape of the ball than using the feet to play the ball. Clearly, American football is more a game of throwing and catching than fielding the ball from a kick.

Princeton and Yale played the first collegiate football game in 1879. Much of what makes American football distinctive can be attributed to Walter Camp, a Yale player, coach, and athletic director who was central to the evolution of the rules and rulebooks from the late 1880s until his death in 1925. Professional football had its start with the National Football League (NFL) in 1920.

## Skills

- Grip the football by putting the forefinger on the seam and three fingers on the laces so there is a V between the forefinger and the thumb.
- Pass so the ball reaches receivers in the numbers (where jersey numbers would be on the chest) as they arrive where they are anticipated to go. Avoid throwing to a stationary player.
- Catch with eyes on the ball so that you see it into your hands. For high passes, catch with palms open and fingers up, watching the tip of the ball into the window between your forefingers and thumbs. For low passes, do the same with fingers down. Run pass patterns without looking for the ball until you have made the cut.



## Rules

- 1) A regulation game starts with a kick off. We will start are games by placing the ball approximately 10 yards from the end zone.
- 2) The place where the ball is spotted is called the line of scrimmage. In regulation football, you have four plays from the line of scrimmage to get 10 yards, which equals a first down. Once a first down is achieved, the offense gets four more plays to get 10 yards. Players must line up on the line of scrimmage behind the ball on their own side of the field before each new play. If they are offside, the play is repeated and their team suffers a loss of 5 yards.
- 3) Ball carriers can only be stopped by pulling one of their flags. If the flags are not flying, the team loses a down, 5 yards, and the play is called back.
- 4) Intentional physical contact will result in the loss of a down, possible ejection from the game, and either a 15-yard penalty if committed by the offense or halfway to the goal line if committed by the defense.
- 5) There can be no forward passes in front of the line of scrimmage.
- 6) The defensive team cannot cross the line of scrimmage until one of the following happens: the count has reached 5 Mississippi ("1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, 3 Mississippi . . .") or the quarterback is no longer in possession of the ball. Once the ball is off the ground, the count to 5 Mississippi begins.

## **COMMON VIOLATIONS**

Holding – 10 yards (offense or defense)	Pass interference - automatic completed pass
Unnecessary roughness - disqualification	Offside – 10 yds
Illegal belts – 15 yards and loss down	Flag guarding – 10 yards

### **Offensive Positions**

#### **Offensive Line (5 players)**

**Tackle   Guard   Center   Guard   Tackle**

In a regulation football game, play is started when the ball is snapped between the centers legs to the quarterback. The offense will then either run a running play or a pass play. It's the offensive lines job to keep the defenders away from the player who has the ball. They may use their hands to block, but they are not allowed to grab a defensive player (that would be a holding penalty). They must also refrain from blocking a defender in the back (this would also be a penalty). Offensive linemen may not go down field on a pass play and cannot catch a pass from a quarterback. In regulation football, the Center begins play by snapping the ball between his legs to the quarterback.

### **Skill Positions**

**Quarterback-** The player who takes the snap from the center and continues the play from there. Usually the quarterback will either hand the ball off to another player or throw a pass.

**Running Back-** The player who lines up behind the quarterback. Often they will either take a handoff from the quarterback, block or catch a pass. They make up the backfield along with the quarterback.

**Wide Receiver-** The players who are split away from the offensive linemen and the backfield. They may block, but they are often the main targets when a pass is thrown.

**Tight End-** A hybrid player who is part offensive lineman and part skill player. They line up next to an offensive tackle and they are often expected to block. If it is a pass, they may also be a possible target for a quarterback's throw (unlike offensive linemen, they may go down field on a pass play).

## Defensive Positions

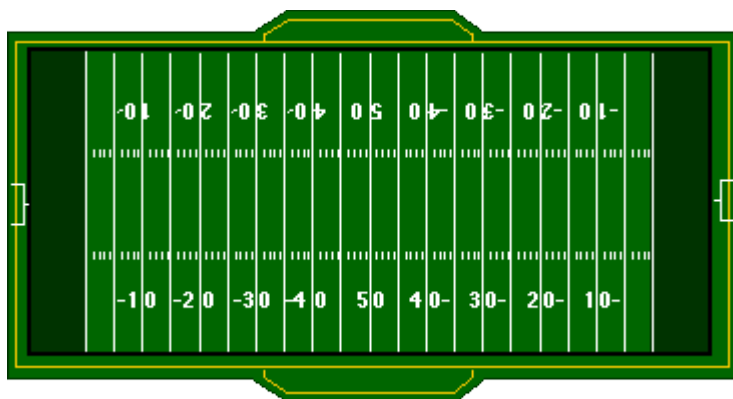
**Defensive Linemen-** There are usually three or four defensive linemen depending on the defensive scheme. They may be called Tackles, Ends or Guards (a nose would be a defensive tackle who aligns over the center). Defensive linemen are closest to the ball and are either trying to stop a run play or rush the quarterback on a pass.

**Linebackers-** They line up behind the defensive linemen and are usually standing about 5 yards away from the ball. They will either try and stop a run or will drop into pass coverage if it is a pass play.

**Defensive Backs-** They are either called cornerbacks or safeties. Defensive Backs are expected to help with defensive run support, but their most important job is to defend against a passing play.

## The Playing Field

The playing field is 120 yards long and 53 1/3 yards wide. The goal lines are 100 yards apart and there is 10 yards worth of depth in each end zone. The goal posts are located in the back of each end zone, so when calculating the distance of a field goal you should include an extra ten yards from where the ball is kicked from (typically, you add 17 yards from the line of scrimmage). The field is marked by yard increments. The offensive team gets four plays to make ten yards. If they get the 10 yards it's called a first down and they are given another four downs to move the ball. The object is to move the ball into the other team's end zone (6 points for a touchdown in a regulation game) or to get close enough to kick a field goal (3 points for a field goal in a regulation game).



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