

Coach Start Here

What is in this starter and how to run your first practice with it



WHO IT IS FOR

Parents and volunteer coaches starting a youth flag football team for players about 8–14. Written for girls' teams first; it works for any team.

HOW TO USE THIS STARTER

- 1 Fill in Our League's Rules (page 2) from your league's rulebook.
- 2 Learn the field and three formations (page 3).
- 3 Run Practice 1 (page 5) with the flag-pulling page (page 6) on your clipboard.
- 4 Teach the four plays (page 4) once players can catch and pull flags.
- 5 On game day, use the rotation sheet for 8 or 10 players (page 7) and take attendance (page 8).

BEFORE THE FIRST PRACTICE

- ☐ A flag belt for every player, plus two spares
- ☐ 12 or more cones
- ☐ 4 footballs sized for your players (your league may name a size)
- ☐ Water, and the families' phone numbers
- ☐ Your league's rulebook and this kit on a clipboard

OUR TEAM

Team _____

Head coach _____

Assistant coach _____

League contact _____

Practice field _____

First practice _____

First game _____

IN THIS STARTER

- 01 Coach Start Here
- 02 Our League's Rules
- 03 The 5v5 Field and Formations
- 04 Play Cards 1–4
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- 06 Flag Pulling and Safe Defense
- 07 Equal-Play Rotation: 8 and 10
- 08 Attendance Tracker

COACHING BASICS

- EVERYONE PLAYS** Equal time each game and every position over the season (the rotation sheets do the counting).
- SAFETY FIRST** Flags only. Check the field for holes and glass, plan water breaks and know where the first aid kit is.
- YOUR LEAGUE FIRST** This kit is a plan to start from, not a rulebook: your league's rules and its referees come first.

PRACTICE 1 AT A GLANCE

- 0:00 Welcome circle
- 0:05 Moving warm-up
- 0:12 Flag Tag
- 0:22 Water break
- 0:24 Gate Pull
- 0:36 Diamond hands
- 0:46 Coach–QB scrimmage
- 0:56 Team huddle

A BEGINNER SEASON

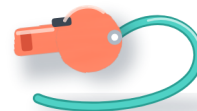
Eight practices build one season: flags and catching, throwing, routes, defense, formations, more routes and plays, two more defenses and a game-day rehearsal.

IN EVERY RULEBOOK USED FOR THIS KIT

No tackling, no blocking and no diving. No flag guarding: no stiff-arm, and no hand, arm or ball covering the flags. A pulled flag ends the play.

Our League's Rules

Fill this in from your league's rulebook and keep it on your clipboard



LEAGUES VARY

Flag football rules change from league to league, and by age group and season. The examples on this page are common patterns from published youth league rulebooks, not your league's rules. Write in your own from your league's rulebook. If this kit and your league ever disagree, your league wins.

LEAGUE AND AGE GROUP

PLAYERS ON THE FIELD

☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

This kit is written for 5 per side.

FIELD: LENGTH × WIDTH, END ZONES

Common youth sizes: 30 × 70 yd with 10-yd end zones, or 25 yd wide with 7-yd end zones.

RUSH

☐ Rush line _____ yd ☐ Rush clock _____ seconds

Examples: rushers start 7 yd from the line, or 5 yd with a 7-second clock.

QUARTERBACK RUNNING

☐ Not allowed ☐ Allowed after a count

☐ After a handoff only

Some leagues do not let the QB run with the ball; some allow it after a count or a handoff.

NO-RUN ZONES

☐ Before each end zone ☐ Either side of midfield

☐ None

Often 5 yd before each end zone and 5 yd either side of midfield. Inside one, every play must be a pass.

CENTER MAY CATCH A PASS

☐ Yes ☐ No

Every play card gives the center a route. If she may not catch, the route still pulls a defender away.

HANDOFFS AND PITCHES

☐ Handoffs ☐ Pitches ☐ Neither

GAME LENGTH AND CLOCK

DOWN TO MIDFIELD AND TO SCORE

POINTS: TOUCHDOWN, EXTRA POINTS

SPINS, JUMPS, MOUTHGUARDS, CLEATS

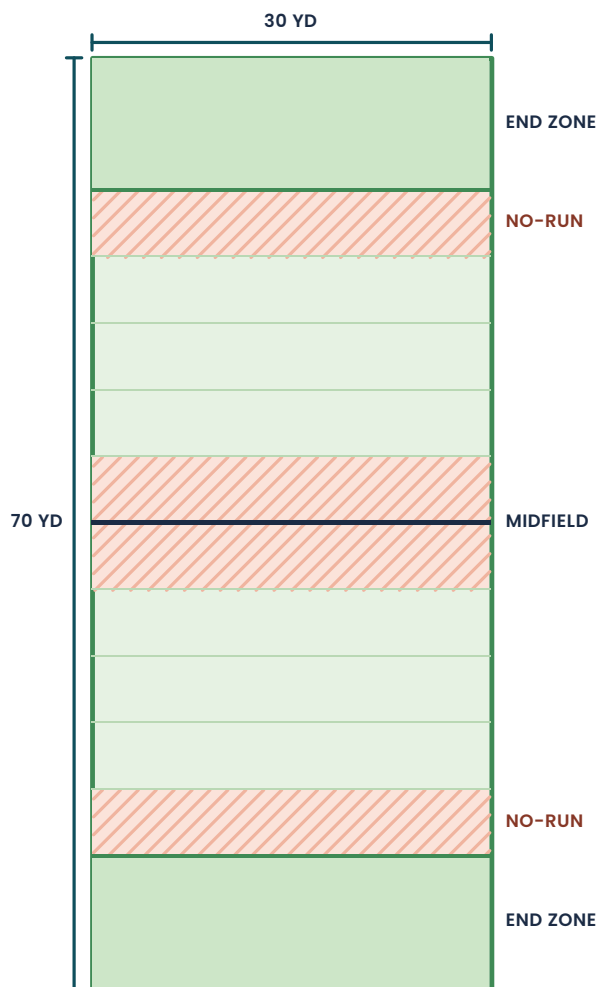
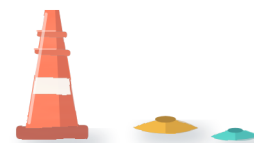
COACHES ON THE FIELD, OTHER RULES

IN EVERY RULEBOOK USED FOR THIS KIT

No tackling, no blocking and no diving. No flag guarding: no stiff-arm, and no hand, arm or ball covering the flags. A pulled flag ends the play.

The 5v5 Field and Formations

The common youth field, three formations and a first defense

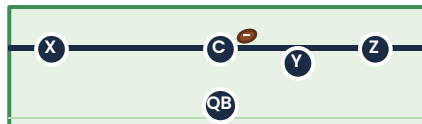


THREE FORMATIONS



Spread

X wide left, Z wide right, Y beside the QB. The defense has to cover the whole width.



Twins Right

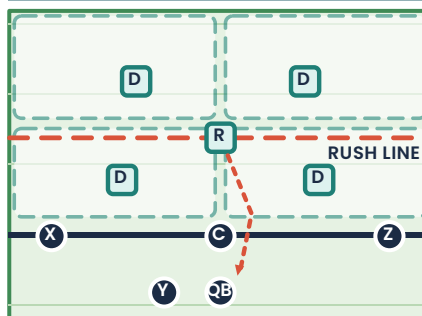
Y and Z together on the right, X alone on the left. Two receivers on one side can work as a pair.



Stack Left

Y lines up straight behind X on the left and steps out to the inside at the snap. Defenders cannot tell which way each will go.

A FIRST DEFENSE: BOX ZONE



Two short and two deep, each guarding a quarter of the field. Simple to learn and hard to throw deep against.

R rushes from the rush line; each D guards the dashed area she stands in. Your rush line: page 2.

WORDS TO KNOW

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

The line across the field where the ball is snapped; every play starts there.

RUSH LINE

Where the rusher starts, often 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.

NO-RUN ZONE

A band where every play must be a pass, often near the end zones and at midfield.

SERIES

One turn on offense or on defense, until the ball changes hands.

FLAG GUARDING

Blocking a defender's reach to your flags with a hand, an arm or the ball: not allowed.

IN EVERY RULEBOOK USED FOR THIS KIT

No tackling, no blocking and no diving. No flag guarding: no stiff-arm, and no hand, arm or ball covering the flags. A pulled flag ends the play. Check your league's sizes and zones on page 2.

Play Cards 1–4

Formation, routes and the QB's reads for each play. Cut a card out for your clipboard

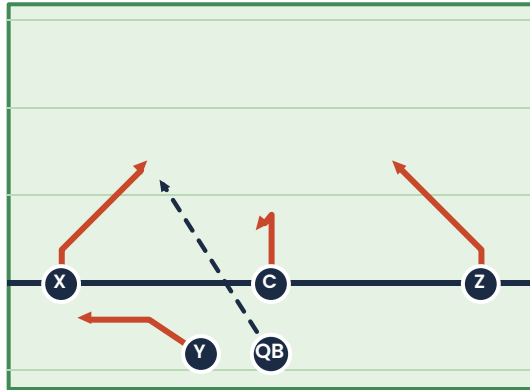


X OFFENSE D DEFENSE ROUTE OR RUN PASS HANDOFF

1 Double Dart

PASS

FORMATION: SPREAD



X Dart · Y Shortcut · Z Dart · C Stop

- 1 QB takes the snap and looks left: throw to X the moment she cuts.
- 2 X covered? Look to Z, then to C on her Stop.

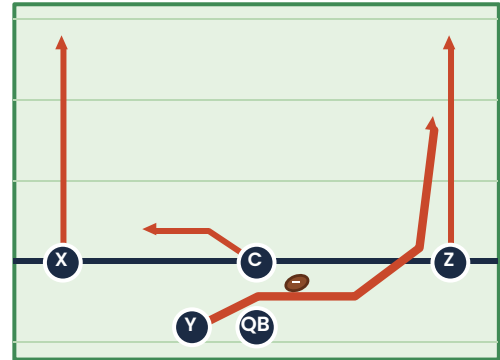
COACHING POINT

Darts come open fast: throw on the cut, before the rusher arrives.

2 Fast Lane

RUN

FORMATION: SPREAD



X Arrow · Y takes the handoff · Z Arrow · C Shortcut

- 1 Y runs across in front of the QB, takes the handoff and runs wide right, then up the sideline.
- 2 X and Z run Arrows to take their defenders deep; C runs a Shortcut left.

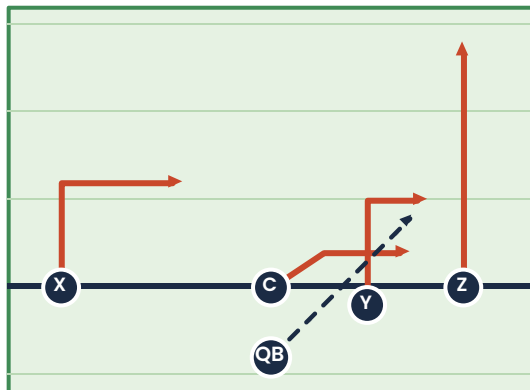
COACHING POINT

No blocking: teammates help by running their defenders away. Not in a no-run zone.

3 Staircase

PASS

FORMATION: TWINS RIGHT



X Bridge · Y Sideline · Z Arrow · C Shortcut

- 1 C runs low, Y in the middle and Z deep, all on the right side.
- 2 QB reads the middle step first: Y, then C, then Z.

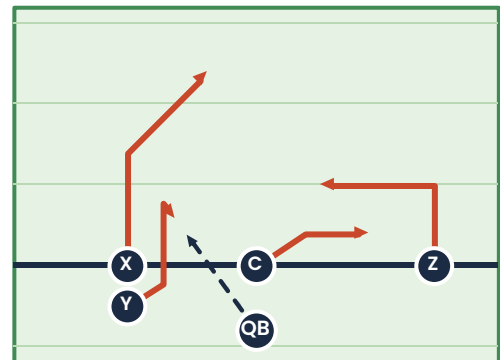
COACHING POINT

One defender cannot guard two steps. Throw to the step she leaves open.

4 Skyline

PASS

FORMATION: STACK LEFT



X Lighthouse · Y Stop · Z Bridge · C Shortcut

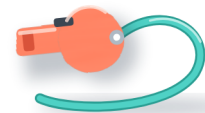
- 1 X (front of the stack) runs a Lighthouse; Y (behind her) stops underneath.
- 2 QB watches the deep defender: if she drops with X, throw to Y; if not, to X, then Z.

COACHING POINT

When the deep defender drops back with X, the Stop underneath is open.

Practice 1: Flags On

Learn the flag rules, the ready stance and catching hands.



YOU NEED

Flag belts for everyone, 12 cones, 4 footballs, water

TOTAL
60 minutes

0:00–0:05 5 MIN	Welcome circle Everyone says her name and a favorite food. Explain the big rule: a pulled flag ends the play, so there is no tackling, no blocking and no diving. Coaching point: Learn every name today and use it.
0:05–0:12 7 MIN	Moving warm-up Two lines, 10 yards across and back: jog, high knees, skips, side shuffles and backpedals. Coaching point: A warm-up, not a race. Talk while you move.
0:12–0:22 10 MIN	Flag Tag Everyone wears a flag belt inside a 15 × 15 yd cone square. On “Go!” pull as many flags as you can and drop each one at a corner cone; if yours is pulled, belt it back on and rejoin. Coaching point: Hands off your own belt: covering your flags is flag guarding, and it is not allowed.
0:22–0:24 2 MIN	Water break Water, and a quick question: what ends a play? (A pulled flag.) Coaching point: Everyone drinks, every break.
0:24–0:36 12 MIN	Gate Pull Pairs at a 5-yard gate of two cones. The runner jogs through; the defender waits in the ready stance, slides to stay in front and pulls one flag. Three turns each, then swap (flag pulling: page 6). Coaching point: Feet wide, knees bent, eyes on the belt. Pull, then lift the flag high.
0:36–0:46 10 MIN	Diamond hands Partners 5 yards apart with a ball. High throws: thumbs together in a diamond. Low throws: little fingers together. Ten catches each, then both step back 2 yards. Coaching point: Watch the ball all the way into your hands.
0:46–0:56 10 MIN	Coach–QB scrimmage Two teams of 3 to 5 in a 20 × 30 yd area. The coach plays QB for both sides; receivers run anywhere to get open and the defense pulls flags. Switch after five plays. Coaching point: Cheer a clean flag pull as loudly as a catch.
0:56–1:00 4 MIN	Team huddle Each player names one thing she learned; the coach gives two shout-outs. Remind families of the next practice. Coaching point: End on something each player did well.

TOTAL 60 MIN

COACH NOTES

Flag Pulling and Safe Defense

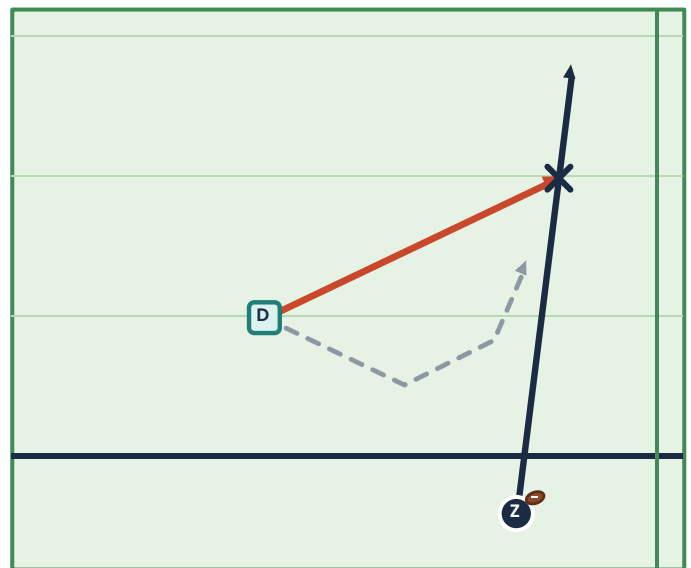
Five steps to a clean pull, and the two rules that keep everyone safe



A CLEAN FLAG PULL

- 1 Ready stance**
Feet a little wider than the shoulders, knees bent, chest up, hands out in front.
- 2 Take the angle**
Run to where the runner is going, not to where she is now.
- 3 Flag in front of you**
Stay in front of the runner, between her and the end zone. Shuffle your feet; do not cross them.
- 4 Eyes on the belt**
Watch her hips and flags, not the ball or her head: hips cannot fake.
- 5 Pull and lift**
Grab a flag, pull it off and hold it up high so the referee can see it. The play is over.

TAKE THE ANGLE



The runner (navy) heads up the sideline. Chasing her from behind (grey) never catches up; the angle (coral) meets her ahead, at the X.

NO CONTACT, EVER

No tackling, no blocking, no diving, no holding and no pushing. Reach for the flag, never the body, the shirt or the ball.

NO FLAG GUARDING

Flag guarding is illegal: no stiff-arm, and no hand, arm or ball covering the flags. Carry the ball in front of you and run to open grass.

MISSED IT?

Missed the flag? Turn and keep chasing; a teammate is coming too. Say it at every practice: "Flag in front, eyes on the belt, pull and lift!"

TWO DRILLS FOR THIS PAGE

GATE PULL

A 5-yard gate of two cones. The runner jogs through; the defender waits in the ready stance, slides to stay in front and pulls one flag.

ANGLE CHASE

The runner goes straight up the sideline; the defender starts about 10 yards inside and takes an angle to pull the flag before the end cone.

Equal-Play Rotation: 8 and 10

Equal playing time, series by series, with every player at every spot



Write a name beside each number. Before each series, send out the five numbers on the next row. On offense they play the spots shown; on defense the QB-column player rushes and the other four cover. After the last row, start again at the top.

8 players

ROSTER

1	_____	5	_____
2	_____	6	_____
3	_____	7	_____
4	_____	8	_____

SERIES	QB OR RUSH	C	X	Y	Z	O OR D
1	1	2	3	4	5	O D
2	6	7	8	1	2	O D
3	3	4	5	6	7	O D
4	8	1	2	3	4	O D
5	5	6	7	8	1	O D
6	2	3	4	5	6	O D
7	7	8	1	2	3	O D
8	4	5	6	7	8	O D

One full round is 8 series: each player plays 5, one at each spot, and sits 3.

HALFTIME TALLY: SERIES PLAYED

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

10 players

ROSTER

1	_____	6	_____
2	_____	7	_____
3	_____	8	_____
4	_____	9	_____
5	_____	10	_____

SERIES	QB OR RUSH	C	X	Y	Z	O OR D
1	1	2	3	4	5	O D
2	10	6	7	8	9	O D
3	4	5	1	2	3	O D
4	8	9	10	6	7	O D
5	2	3	4	5	1	O D
6	6	7	8	9	10	O D
7	5	1	2	3	4	O D
8	9	10	6	7	8	O D
9	3	4	5	1	2	O D
10	7	8	9	10	6	O D

One full round is 10 series: each player plays 5, one at each spot, and sits 5.

HALFTIME TALLY: SERIES PLAYED

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

FAIRNESS CHECK

Fair by design: at every point in the chart, no player has played more than one series more than anyone else. Check it at halftime by counting.

A STEADY QB

Want a steady QB? Swap her into the QB column whenever she is on. Her series and everyone else's stay the same.

Attendance Tracker

Twelve players, twelve practices or games, one sheet for the season



Write the date of each practice or game at the top of a column. Mark P for present, L for late, A for away.

#	PLAYER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
	Date													
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														
9														
10														
11														
12														

MISSED ONE?

Missed a practice? Call or text the family with one thing the team learned, so she is ready next time.

CONTACTS

Team parent _____ League contact _____

Weather or field line _____