



5 key steps for making a youth flag football playbook

1. Start with eight to 10 individual plays in your flag football playbook. This allows your team to have enough variety in formations, plays and motions, without becoming too confused between the different options. Once your team feels confident in those plays, you can then expand and add more to try out.

2. Most players are visual learners, so feel free to print out our flag football plays and walk your team through them. They can even be put into wrist guards for quick reference. This will help when you call plays at the beginning of each down, and when you or the quarterback needs to make a speedy play call during the game. As you build out these wrist guards, make sure to number them in order. You'll be quite happy they're organized when the quarterback yells "Play 3, play 3, play 3!" at the line of scrimmage with eight seconds on the clock.

3. Include plays of various difficulty levels in your flag football playbook. We have labeled all of our plays as beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, so it takes the guessing out of which plays are more difficult than others. Mix and match these levels to your team's experience and strengths. We recommend starting with more plays suited for beginners to build the needed fundamental flag football skills. Then your team can work their way up to more advanced plays as they gain confidence and skill.

4. Practice makes perfect. As you start finalizing your flag football playbook, practice the plays with your team before your first game. This will give you a good idea of what football plays your team excels at, and what should be swapped out ahead of time. This also illuminates hidden strengths of individual players that can be emphasized throughout the season. Again, we recommend giving the plays fun, unique code-names or numbers for reference when practicing, so you can quickly get into formation during gameplay.

5. Know your routes. Knowing the fundamentals of flag football is the most important part of the game. Make sure you teach your team the individual routes before diving head first into detailed plays. Think of the individual routes as the foundation: Like many aspects of life, without a solid foundation to build off of, it's near impossible to grow. Focusing on the fundamentals makes it much easier for players to absorb the complexity of the football plays, and adapt to play changes and customizations when needed.



Tips for organizing your flag football playbook

Offense: As you start to build your own personalized youth flag football playbook, we recommend starting small and simple, and working your way up. This allows your team to master a smaller subset of plays, routes, and formations before expanding upon them and trying more difficult setups. Fundamentals are key in flag football plays, and this strategy helps emphasize that.

Start with eight to 10 flag football plays in your flag football playbook. For a quick refresher and to reference all of the suggested plays, you can reference the Flag Football Playbook in the Coaches section of our website.

There are three different ways you can organize your basic flag football playbook by:

Formation: When organizing your flag football playbook by formation, group together all your plays by their respective player starting locations, or formation. For example, you can have a section dedicated to single back plays, a section for spread plays, and so on.

This allows you to call effective plays quickly upon discovering weaknesses within the opposing team's defense. For example, if the defense appears to be weaker on the right side, you can swiftly browse your trips right formation plays to find the perfect choice. By sorting the playbook by formation, it also allows you to have multiple iterations of a similar play next to each other, so you can try different customizations out. We can sense the first down already.

Difficulty: You can also group your football playbook by the difficulty of the individual plays you have selected so you don't have to second-guess whether a play is too simple or advanced for your team.

Regardless of the skill level of your team, we recommend having a few plays of each difficulty within your flag football playbook. Even the most skilled team can reference a beginner play and score some quick, heavy yardage. Also, intermediate and advanced plays act as an opportunity to challenge newer players and teams.



Yardage: Lastly, you can organize your flag football playbook by the intended yardage gained by the plays. For example, you can have a group of short-pass plays, a group of medium-length plays, and a group of plays designated for long yardage. This allows you to quickly reference your plays and select one for the needed yardage in that unique situation.

Is it the final minute of the game, you're 20 yards from first down, and you're in a pinch? It's a good thing you have a group of plays pre-selected for this yardage distance. We recommend some fly routes!

While it may seem beneficial to have only long yardage plays, this is not actually recommended. Often long yardage plays have a lower completion rate and a much higher interception rate. If you're always shooting for that long distance, more things are likely to go wrong in between. Also, sometimes short, quick plays can be the most successful and result in the most gained yards.

Pro-tip: By having a variety of yardage plays, it will always keep the defense on their toes, because they won't know where, or who, your intended receiver is. Keep them guessing!

How to adapt your football playbook

Three words: Customize, customize, customize. While we have laid out routes, starting points, organization ideas, and various other recommendations, all plays can, and should, be adapted to your team's individual strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, all suggested football formations, routes, and plays can be adapted to 7 on 7 playbooks, if needed.

For example, change the in play to an out play. Shift your star receiver to the right side, instead of the left. These seemingly subtle changes can make a big difference in your flag football playbook. And we encourage creativity from our coaches!

You've got this, Coach.



How rules impact your flag football playbook

As you start to further build out your flag football playbook, and customize your plays, it is important to remember to accommodate plays to fit the league rules. Here are four flag football rules to keep in mind:

The quarterback is not allowed to do running plays. While quarterbacks are allowed to move around behind the line of scrimmage to complete passes, they cannot gain yardage. If the defense blitzes; this is the only time a QB can run once the blitzer passes the line of scrimmage.

Direct handoffs are only allowed behind the line of scrimmage. These handoffs can be done by the center, quarterback, or between receivers—as long as it's behind the line of scrimmage. Handoffs are a great strategy and twist for your plays, just make sure they are within the rules.

Center sneak plays are not allowed. We encourage you to get clever, just not in this way.

All players are eligible to receive a pass. Whether it's a receiver, or your center, or even your usual quarterback, all players can receive a pass. This gives you a little more freedom when drafting out new plays.

These four examples are some pro-tips to help keep your plays organized and optimized within the league rules. Make sure to read all rules ahead of time, as you start to build out your flag football playbook.

Good luck on your season—it's going to be a blast!