

INSTANT FAN GUIDE
FOOTBALL

**The perfect take-
along guidebook
for people of all
ages who want to
learn the great
game of football
fast and easy.**

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Table of Contents

Getting Started	2
The Field	3
Basic Rules and Definitions	3
Scoring	5
The Goal of the Offense	6
Offensive Positions.....	7
Offensive Formations (Examples).....	8
The Goal of the Defense	9
Defensive Positions.....	9
Defensive Formations (Examples)	10
Offense vs. Defense (Examples).....	11
Strategy	12
More Rules and Definitions.....	13
Terms and Notes.....	14
Teams, Conferences and Champions	15

Getting Started

This guide describes football's basic concepts. Because the game can be understood and enjoyed without knowing every rule, all of the rules of the game are not explained here. However, you'll find descriptions and definitions that will improve your ability to follow and appreciate the action after 30 minutes of reading or less.

Each team is made of 11 defensive and 11 offensive players with only 11 players on the field at one time. Usually, the four 15 minute quarters take about 3 hours to play on the 100 yard field (see *Figure 1*). The total length of the field is 360 feet long and it is 160 feet wide. After 2 quarters, there is a 15 minute half-time break. Each team has 3 time outs per half, and there is a time out 2 minutes before the end of each half (2 minute warning).

Now that you have the framework, the details and description of the game can begin.



The Field

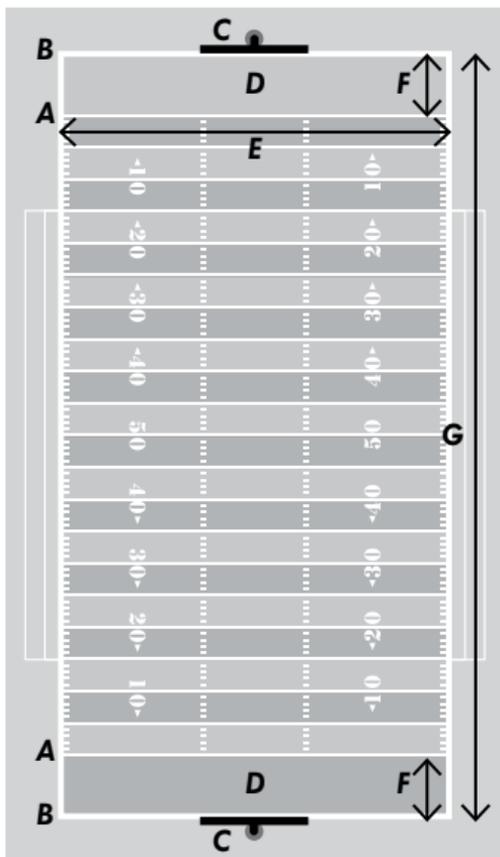


FIGURE 1:

- A** Goal Lines
- B** End Lines
- C** Goal Posts
- D** End Zones
- E** 160'
- F** 30'
- G** 360'

Basic Rules and Definitions

Territory

A player always has his back to the end zone his team is defending (his end zone). Put another way, a player always faces the end zone belonging to the other team (their end zone). Furthermore, from your team's end zone to the 50 yard line is your side of the field, and the 50 yard line to their end zone is their side of the field. For example, being on your own 20 yard line means you are 80 yards from their end zone, but being on their 20 yard line means you are 20 yards from their end zone. You want your team in their end zone since that is how a team scores points (*see Scoring*).



Line of Scrimmage

The offense and defense line up on their side of the ball until the ball is moved, starting the play. It is the nose of the football that marks and begins the line of scrimmage with an imaginary line extending to both sidelines.

Tackle

A knee or part of the upper body of a ball carrier that touches the ground from contact by an opposing player. Two other forms of tackling are stopping a ball carrier's forward progress and forcing him out of bounds (on the sidelines).

Fumble

If a player has possession of the ball and he loses control of it before he is tackled, it is a free ball. The team that recovers the ball gains possession. An incomplete pass is not a fumble since the receiver or defender does not gain control of the ball before it hits the ground.

Completed Pass (or Interception by the Defense)

A pass is caught when a player has control of the ball and two feet on the ground in the field of play. Only one forward pass per play is allowed. However, runners can lateral the ball (throw the ball behind their body) to a teammate as many times as they want.

Most Common Penalties (more on p. 13)

1. **Offensive offsides or Motion** – The offense can have one man in motion (moving before the play starts) as long as he does not move forward. Once the offensive line is set, it can not move before the ball moves or it is a 5 yard penalty (the ball is moved back 5 yards).

2. **Defensive offsides (5 yard penalty)** – Before the ball moves the defense can not touch the offense. They can move on both sides of the ball, but they must be on their side once the ball moves.

3. **Holding** – When blocking, the offense can not grab a defender; it is a 10 yard penalty. Defensive holding occurs when a receiver is kept from freely running down field for a pass. The offense gets 5 yards and an automatic 1st down.



Scoring

Field Goal (FG = 3 points)

The offense kicks the ball through the goal posts (or uprights) in the end zone of the defending team. The limit for most kickers is about 50 yards from the goal posts. Since a field goal is attempted 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage, a team needs to get to about the 30.

Touchdown (TD = 6 points)

A player carries the ball over the other team's goal line.

Conversion after TD (1 or 2 points)

After a TD, the ball is placed on the 2 yard line. The scoring team can do one of two things:

1. Kick the ball through the goal posts for 1 point.
2. Run an offensive play to get the ball in the end zone for 2 points (low success rate).

Strategically, a team will usually kick the ball for 1 point after a TD for a total of 7 (it takes 3 FG's to outscore 1 TD, 9-7).

Safety (2 points)

If the offense is tackled in their end zone (not the defense's end zone), the defensive team is given 2 points and they receive the ball from a punt.

Kickoff

The scoring team must kick the ball to the opposing team after a TD or FG from their own 35 yard line. The punt after a safety is also from the 35 yard line.



The Goal of the Offense

The team that has the ball wants to move the ball towards the end zone of the other team. The offensive team has four downs (i.e. plays) to move the ball forward at least 10 yards. If the team gains the 10 yards within the four downs, they are awarded another four downs to gain another 10 yards. If the offense does not gain 10 yards in the 4 downs, the ball is given to the opposing team at the spot of the ball (the offensive players for that team come on the field and start with 1st and 10 yards to go).

A team will rarely run an offensive play on 4th down to gain the necessary yardage needed for a 1st down (even 4th and inches). Instead, the offense will usually kick the ball. If the team is too far from the defensive team's goal posts to try a field goal, they will punt the ball to the defense. The advantage of punting is the gain in field position since an average punt travels 40 yards down field. A team would rather give the ball to the opposing team 40 yards farther away from their end zone to lessen the chance of a score.

An example of a series of plays starting from the offensive team's own 20 yard line (80 yards from a TD) is below. The offense was stopped on their 47 yard line.

Down & Yards To Go (YTG)	Result of play
1st and 10 YTG	Gain 4 yards
2nd and 6 YTG.....	Lose 2 yards
3rd and 8 YTG	Gain 12 yards
1st and 10 YTG	No gain
2nd and 10 YTG	Gain 14 yards
1st and 10 YTG	Gain 1 yard
2nd and 9 YTG.....	Gain 2 yards
3rd and 7 YTG	Lose 4 yards
4th and 11 YTG	Punt



Offensive Positions

The 11 offensive positions can be broken down into 3 groups:

1. **Linemen** – average 6 feet or taller and weigh around 300 lbs.
2. **Backfield** – fast, strong runners in a variety of sizes.
3. **Receivers** – sprinters, hands and concentration to catch passes.

Offensive Line (Blockers)

Center (C) – Starts the play by hiking the ball to the quarterback.

Right and Left Guard (RG, LG) – Guards are mobile, strong, and able to make blocks all over the field.

Right and Left Tackle (RT, LT) – Tackles may not be as mobile as a guard, but must protect the quarterback's back during a pass play (protects the outside of the line).

Backfield (Run or pass the ball)

Quarterback (QB) – Hands the ball to a running back (see TB and FB below), throws a pass, or he runs himself (variety of sizes).

Running Backs (RB)

Tailback (TB) – The most frequent ball carrier and receiver from the backfield.

Fullback (FB) – Big blocking back who usually provides a lead block in front of the tailback.

Receivers (Pass receivers)

Tight End (TE) – Large receiver who plays on the line next to the RT or LT. Must block and catch passes. Not necessarily fast.

Wide Receiver (WR) – Sprinters who line up wide of the offensive line to get down field quickly for a pass.



