

# The Quick & Dirty Guide To

# NFL Football

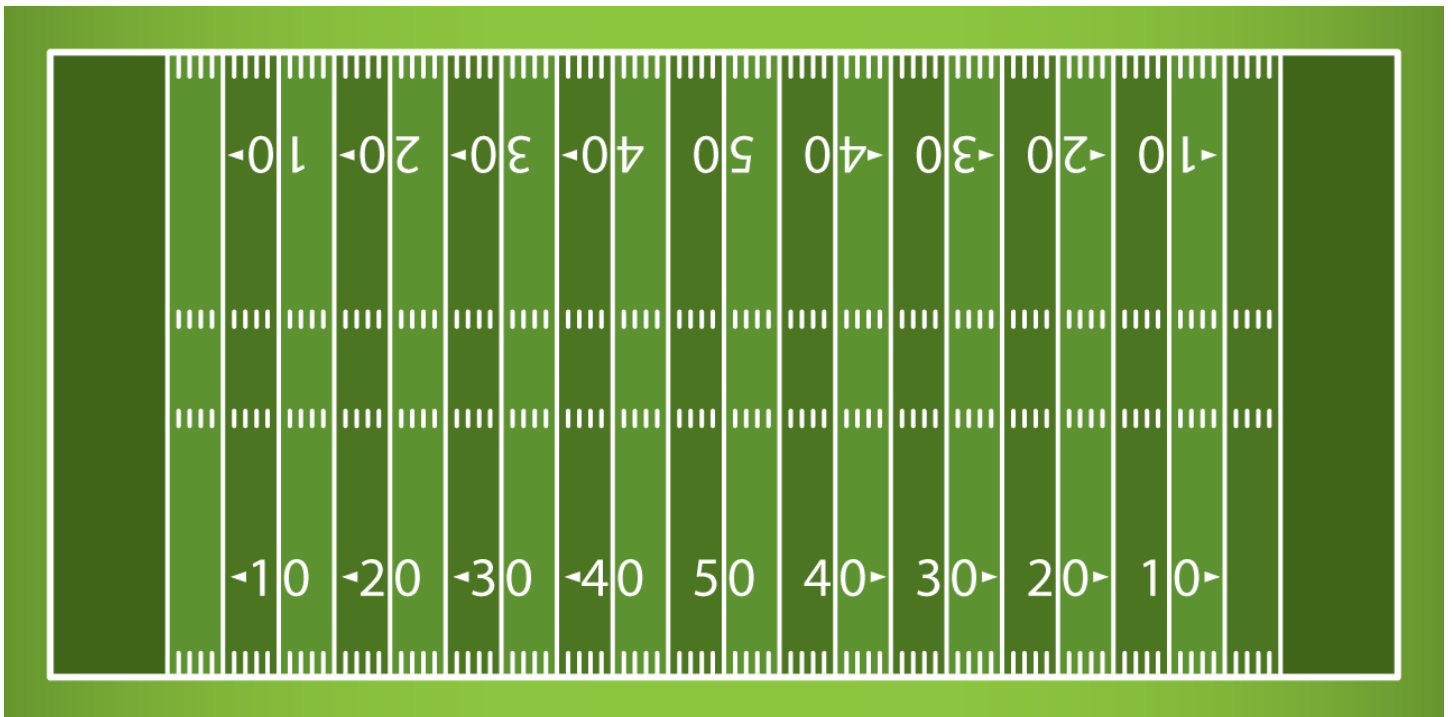
(2017 Ed.)

This guide is only the basics of the game. I encourage you to keep a copy handy while watching the games, until you get a handle on it. There's not much difference between NFL and College or High School American Football, so feel free to use this while watching whatever games you find interesting. I hope you enjoy the game as much as I do, and congrats on your continued learning!

~Terra

## FIELD

- 100 Yards Long +10 Yards for each End Zone
- 53 Yards Wide
- White border is out-of-bounds
- Goal post in each End Zone
  - 10 ft. high to crossbar
  - Upright posts on top of crossbar 18.5 ft. wide



# TEAMS

- 32 Teams
- 2 Conferences (NFC, AFC)
- 4 Divisions per conference (North, South, East, West)
- 4 Teams per conference
- 53 players per team
  - 45 can dress to play each game day
  - 11 players from each team on the field at a time

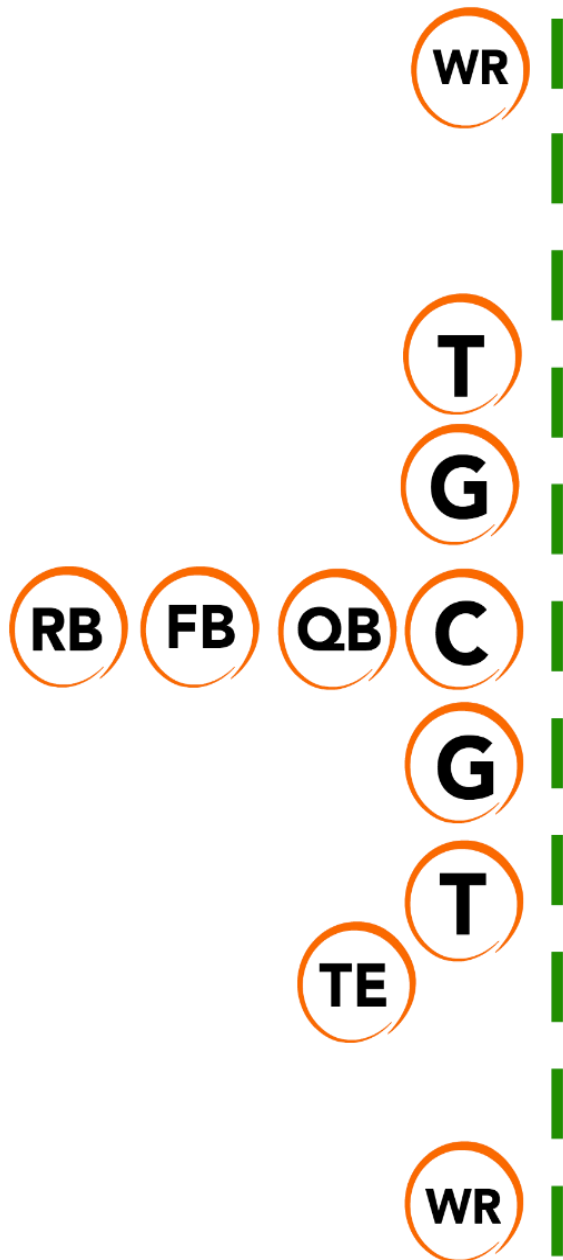


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# PLAYERS

## OFFENSIVE LINE

It is the offensive line's job to get the football into the end zone they're facing.



→ **Center:** The player in the middle of the line. He holds the football on the line of scrimmage, and it's his job to get (snap) the ball to the Quarterback

→ **Guard:** stand on either side of the Center

→ **Tackle:** stand on either side of the Guards

→ **Tight End:** stand outside the Guards. It's their job to block the defense, though they sometimes run to catch a pass

→ **Wide Receiver:** stand noticeably farther out on the offensive line. It's their job to run toward the end zone and shake (get rid of) their defensive player to catch a pass from the Quarterback

→ **Quarterback:** the team leader. He gets the snap from the center and passes the ball to a receiver who is open, hands the ball off to a running back, or runs it himself. He's the guy you can hear yelling during the game

→ **Running Back (Half Back):** they line up in the backfield, behind the Quarterback. It's their job to receive the ball in a hand-off and run it toward the end zone

→ **Full Back:** a type of Running Back who blocks for the Running Back who is carrying the ball

# DEFENSIVE LINE

The defensive line changes from team to team, play to play. Their job is to keep the offensive line from reaching the end zone and scoring. They line up opposite, and facing, the offense on the line of scrimmage.

→ **Nose Guard:** usually a very large man who is opposite the Center. His job is to cause congestion so it's harder for the offense to run the ball. He may or may not be present on the line

→ **Defensive Tackle:** on either side of the Nose Guard, their job is the same as his

→ **Defensive End:** on either side of the Tackles, their job is to rush the Quarterback to try to keep him from being able to pass the ball

→ **Linebacker:** the main tackling player, his job is to bring to the ground whichever player is in possession of or receiving the ball. There are usually three, and sometimes four, of these players on the field. The Middle Linebacker calls the plays and formations for the defense

→ **Cornerback:** covers the Wide Receivers, and help Linebackers on run plays

→ **Safety:** his job is to prevent a big play. He stands behind all the other players on the field to help block any play that continues down field toward the goal

## SPECIAL TEAMS

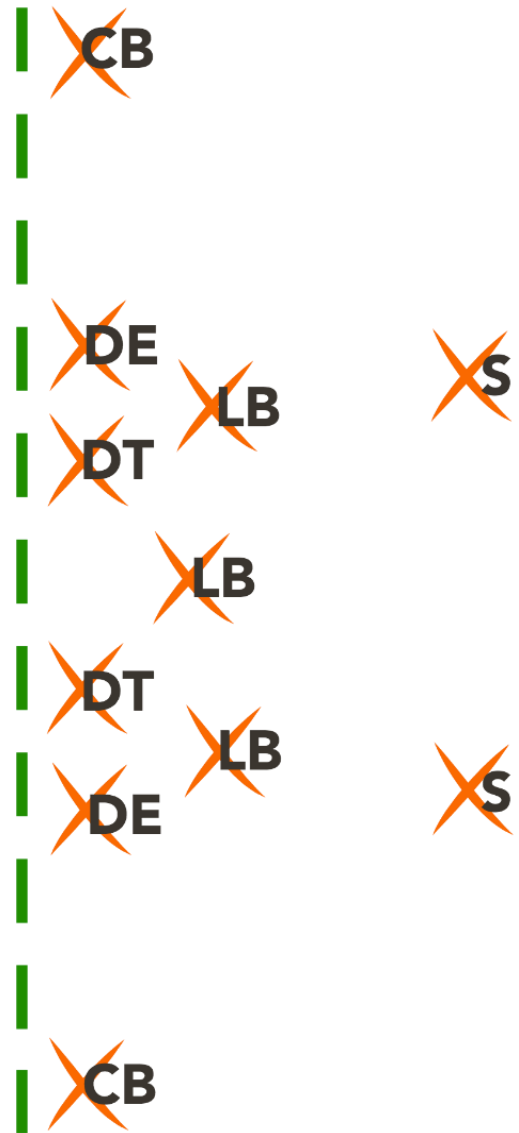
The special teams' players come on the field for kicking plays.

→ **Long Snapper** - a special skill set is required of this player, who snaps the ball to the Punter, because the distance is farther. This is usually not the same person as the Center

→ **Place Holder** - he holds the ball for the field goal kicker

→ **Punter** - he's the guy who kicks the ball high and long, to get it as far from the end zone behind him as possible

→ **Field Goal Kicker** - He kicks the ball for the extra point after a touchdown, so he must be accurate. He's usually also the guy who kicks the ball at kickoff



# GAME PLAY

The game is played in four 15-minute increments, which rarely take exactly 15 minutes. The average game lasts somewhere between 2 and 3 hours, because the game clock stops between plays, and for other reasons such as:

- end of a quarter
- timeout
- 2-minute warning (the final 2 minutes of the 2nd & 4th quarters)
- penalty
- injury
- scoring
- possession change
- measuring a first down

Each team gets 4 tries, or downs, to move the ball toward the end zone. The offense loses possession of the ball by

- not moving the ball 10 yards in 4 downs
- scoring
- fumbling with recovery by the defense
- pass interception by the defense
- missing a field goal
- getting tackled in the end zone

# USEFUL TERMS

- **Call an Audible** - when the Quarterback changes the play on the line of scrimmage
- **Snap** - when the ball is put into play at the line of scrimmage
- **Sack** - when the Quarterback is tackled behind the line of scrimmage
- **Blitz** - when the defense rushes more players than normal to sack the Quarterback
- **Fair Catch** - when the player receiving a kicked ball signals he's going to catch it. He doesn't get to move the ball forward, and he doesn't get tackled
- **Interception** - a pass caught by the defense. Also called a pick
- **Safety** - when a player is tackled in his own end zone, the defense gets 2 points and possession of the football
- **Play-Action Pass** - when the Quarterback fakes a handoff, and then passes the ball
- **Punt** - a kick to the other team to give them the ball as far from their end zone as possible, rather than lose possession at a possibly much-closer line of scrimmage

# SCORING

- **Touchdown - 6 points** - when the offensive team crosses the goal line with the ball
- **Extra Point - 1 point** - when the ball is kicked from the 15-yard line, between the uprights on the goal post following a touchdown
- **Field Goal - 3 points** - can happen any time, but usually happens on the fourth down inside the 35-yard line. The ball is kicked between the uprights on the goal post
- **2-Point Conversion - 2 points** - can take place instead of the extra point kick after a touchdown. The ball is placed on the 2-yard line, but instead of kicking it, the offensive team tries to move it past the goal line as in normal play. If the defense intercepts this ball, they can run it back to score 2 points
- **Safety - 2 Points** - when the offense is tackled behind their goal line; can also happen if a dropped or blocked punt goes through the offensive end zone. Is sometimes awarded as a penalty, such as holding, in the end zone

# PENALTIES

Only the most common; you may hear others during game play.

## 5 YARDS

- **Delay of Game** - the offense doesn't snap the ball before the 25 or 40 second play clock runs out
- **Offside** - any part of a defensive player's body is across the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped
- **False Start** - anyone on the offensive line moves, except the man-in-motion, before the snap
- **Encroachment** - a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage and contacts an offensive player before the snap
- **Neutral Zone Infraction** - a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the snap and causes an offensive player to move
- **Illegal Formation** - there must be 7 offensive players on the line of scrimmage, and every other player must be at least 1 yard behind them
- **Illegal Substitution** - when more than 11 players break from the huddle. They must stay huddled until the extra player(s) are off the field
- **Illegal Motion** - the players in the backfield move toward the line of scrimmage, instead of parallel to it, before the snap, or 2 players moving at the same time without resetting the ball
- **Illegal Contact** - making contact with the receiver after the receiver has advanced more than 5 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, if the Quarterback is still in pocket and still has the ball
- **Holding** (defense) - a defensive player holds or pulls an offensive player when more than 5 yards from the line of scrimmage
- **Too Many Players on the Field** - there are more than 11 players on either side when the ball is snapped. An automatic first down is awarded to the offense when the defense is in violation
- **Ineligible Receiver Downfield** (pass) - the ball is caught by any player other than a running back, wide receiver, or tight end
- **Ineligible Receiver Downfield** (punt) - if anyone except the two players at the end of the line cross the line of scrimmage during a punt

## 10 YARDS

- **Holding** (offense) - an offensive player holds, grabs, or pulls a defensive player to keep him from progressing or gaining advantage
- **Pass Interference** (offense) - when an offensive player keeps a defensive player from playing pass defense
- **Intentional Grounding** - when the ball is thrown without a realistic chance of being caught

## 15 YARDS

- **Personal Foul** - a flagrant violation that causes injury to another player
- **Roughing the Passer** - a defensive player makes contact with the Quarterback after he has passed the ball
- **Roughing the Kicker** - a defensive player makes contact with the kicker before the kicker touches the ball
- **Face Mask** - restraining a player by grabbing the facemask on the helmet
- **Unnecessary Roughness** - using force beyond what is necessary to block or tackle another player
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** (acting like a jackass on the field) - faking an injury, taunting, ~~excessive celebration after a play~~, removing one's helmet on the field, leaving the bench to join a fight, etc.



# OFFICIALS

All are responsible for watching gameplay in their area after the snap.

- **Referee** - general game supervisor, final say on rulings
- **Head Linesman** - watches the line of scrimmage for penalties before the snap
- **Line Judge** - helps the head linesman from the opposite side of the field
- **Back Judge** - stands deep behind the defense, in the middle of the field, and watches receivers, backs, and nearby defensive players for penalties. Also, responsible for counting offensive players
- **Side Judge** - stands behind the defense, near the sideline on the same side as the head linesman, and rules on incomplete passes, illegal blocking, and interference
- **Field Judge** - stands behind the defense, near the sideline on the same side as the line judge, and rules on incomplete passes, illegal blocking, and interference. Also, responsible for counting defensive players
- **Umpire** - stands where the action is, moving toward the action and looking for offensive penalties