

YOUTH FOOTBALL DRILLS & GAMES

Demonstrate Skill—Explain Drill—Walk-through w/o balls (depending on the drill)—Drill—Game

Drills that build off each other are beneficial! Sample progression: talk about flag pulling/demonstrate, practice 1v1 pulling coach's flag, 1v1 vs teammate, talk about group "tackling" (flag pulling) and positioning, 2v1 vs coach, then 2v1 with only players

Drills that incorporate more than one skill/movement are also beneficial. For instance, run through a straight or zig-zag cone line, then have to beat a defender 1v1; complete a four-cone drill before catching a pass from coach, etc.

Drills By Skill:

Warm Up

- GTKY (circle passing, say your favorite color, food, etc. before passing)
- 4 Corners (with or without a ball; run to 4 different spots and do something active at each spot, like: jumping jacks, high knees, donkey kicks, touch-your-toes-touch-the-sky)
- Get up!: kids run around and then fall down when the coach says to. Have them practice getting back up quickly to avoid potential injury situations when they play in games.
- Simon Says doing any of these things!

Passing/Catching

Drills:

- Review passing form, stationary (practice with and without ball): bring ball back, elbow bent, ball held high
- Review passing form, motion: step forward with front foot, follow-through toward target
- Pass with coach (demonstrate/talk through proper form—no underhand throws!)
- Players throw with a parent
- Players throw with each other
- Players try to throw ball through a hula hoop (or other target)

Games:

- Keep your yard clean: Field is split in two with many balls on both sides. The two teams have set number of minutes to continually throw all the balls on their side to the other side. Team with fewest balls on their half at the end of the time wins.
- Hit the coach: Players line up in one line. Coach runs by in front of them and they try to throw the ball and hit the coach (like a coach gauntlet)
- Hot potato
- Partner "musical chairs" adaptation: two players play catch (optional: when music is playing). When music stops or coach blows a whistle, whoever has the ball has to run away from the partner, who tries to pull their flag.

Most important takeaway(s):

Passing: throwing overhand, follow-through toward target

Catching: keeping eyes on the ball

Running/Defense

Drills:

- Review form: Positioning while pulling flags (balance, shuffling to slow down when closer), staying in front of carrier and staying low, watching ball carrier's hips, not feet or head, letting go if you grab anything but the flag (i.e. shirt, pants)
- Zig-zag cones drills:
 - Single-line or relay races without a ball
 - Single-line or relay races with a ball
 - Snake run: cones are much more spread out and have one person at a cone. Player runs to next cone and hands off the ball to player there, who runs to the next cone.
 - Run through cones with a stationary player at each cone trying to pull the flag
- 4-cone drills (box drill): Players go around box facing the same direction the whole time (run forward, shuffle left, run backward, shuffle right)
- Handoff line: Players are in two lines facing each other. Players run to the other line and handoff to the person at the front of the other line, then get in the back of the other line so they can keep running back-and-forth.
- 1-v-1 flag pulling:
 - Stationary
 - Starting with the runner moving
 - Two lines facing each other
 - Two lines parallel to each other starting apart (chase down)
- 2-v-1 flag pulling
 - Same as above, just add a second defender since 1v1 is often hard
 - Chase down: Have three lines, runner is in the middle line, with defense about 5 yards to each side. Runner line starts a couple yards ahead of defense. Players see if they can catch and pull the flag after coach says "go."
- Running lanes: have one line of running backs. Coach is QB and calls out left/right. Players start running that direction to receive handoff and run to other side (you could have 4 lanes, 2 on each side and call out a number they have to run through if they pick up left/right quickly)

Games:

- Gauntlet: players line up behind two lines of perpendicular cones, about 3-4 feet apart. One player at a time tries to run through without getting their flag pulled. Work on keeping head up and looking where you are going instead of at the defense.
- Freeze tag: players are frozen when flag is pulled.
- What time is it Mr. Fox
- Sharks and minnows
- Knockout: players run around in marked off area trying to pull each other's flags, last one standing is winner (make area smaller as players get out)

Most important takeaway(s):

Defense: slowing down when near a runner, improving hand-eye coordination pulling flags

Running: looking for open space when running, improving agility changing directions