



**NEW LENOX**  
COMMUNITY  
PARK DISTRICT

# Flag Football Coaching Tips

***Great things happen when kids get together to play. They make friends, have fun, work on sportsmanship, get exercise, practice teamwork, learn leadership and compete. And your support makes it all possible. THANK YOU!***

As a coach you are looked upon as a teacher, mentor, leader, role model, authority and parental figure by the youngsters on your team. Do not underestimate the effect or influence (positive and negative) you can have upon a child. In coaching young players, winning or losing should be the least important thing for both you and the players. Soon enough, children will be exposed to the competitive nature of sports. Your goal should be to teach the children about the actual sport and instill upon them a love for the game. If your players enjoy themselves and want to play again next season, you should consider yourself a **SUCCESSFUL** coach.

Whether you're a rookie or a veteran coach, please read through these coaching tips that will help you this season:

1. **Let your child know you're considering coaching.**
  - a. Explain that you're really looking forward to this, and ask for feedback about it. Your child's opinion may or may not change your decision about coaching, but it's good to have your child in on this new role you'll be playing from the beginning.
2. **Be clear on your own goals for coaching.**
  - a. Coaches of kids just starting to play a sport may have the simple goal of a season enjoyable enough that everyone returns for next season.
3. **Share your goals with your players and their parents from the start.**
  - a. Having a pre-season parent meeting is ideal. If it's too late for that, just get the parents together at the end of a practice and let them know why you're out there. It might sound like this: "My number one goal this season is to give your kids such an enjoyable experience that they all can't wait for next season. And, yes, I hope to teach them some skills, too!" Of course, if you have more ambitious goals in terms of skill development or imparting life lessons, share those, too.
4. **Invite the parents to help.**
  - a. It often helps to have some parents pitch in at practices and games. If you invite them directly, they will likely support you with a few extra hands. Getting them involved at your practices also makes it more likely they'll be comfortable practicing the sport with their child outside of official practice time.
5. **Welcome each player by name at every practice and game.**
  - a. When kids arrive to coaches who are smiling and greeting them by name, they feel welcome and positive from the start.
6. **Developing a practice plan**
  - a. Start to develop drills to work on your weaknesses.
  - b. Showing up to practice with a plan or script for how things should be run is a way to take pressure off you and your coaching staff and will provide your players with constant instruction and interaction.

## 7. Research

- a. Use the internet to find hundreds of drills you can use and specific coaching tools. YouTube is a great tool for this.

## 8. Assessing your talent accurately and quickly.

- a. As soon as you start practicing you need to assess the talent you have through drills and game like situations. This process isn't just to find who your best players are but to discover what your team needs to work on as a group and how you can elevate the less skilled players so you can rely on everyone.

## 9. Plan ahead

- a. Plan your season out now or shortly after assessing your talent. What do you want your players to know or be able to do by the end of the season?

## 10. Pick 1-2 areas of focus per practice/game.

- a. You likely only have one hour for your practice. Pick one topic (two at the most!) to introduce and repeat over and over again. At the start of practice, you might say, "Today is going to be all about passing." Then each time you bring the players in, ask them, "What is our focus today?" Then have this same focus for your competition that week. Whenever you see it being executed well, let your players know it, "Milo, awesome pass to Nathan!"

## 11. Stations in practice

- a. Depending on the number of coaches you have use stations so you can focus on specific skills and get that muscle memory practice. It is also a great opportunity to enlist parents to help. Most football practices these days are fast moving, high focus and high attention to detail with very little standing around.

## 12. Limit Standing Around

- a. This is a common problem with youth sports that ultimately turns kids off. Whether it's a game or practice, engage every participant consistently. Kids don't attend practice to watch others play. Kids enjoy practices when they have fun and they experience an improvement in their overall skills. Many professional coaches put a major emphasis on fast paced and interactive practices that eliminate downtime.
- b. When kids are moving and active, they are more likely to stay focused. At the younger ages, avoid lines. Bring plenty of equipment, so kids are not standing around waiting for their turn. Find games/drills that give kids a lot of repeated practice of the skills.
- c. The sideline during a game is a perfect opportunity to coach up your team. This keeps your players engaged during the game and can help prevent future mistakes on the field.

## 13. Stretching

- a. Always do a light stretch before practice. You don't need to spend a lot of time at the beginning of practice. I concentrate my stretching at the end of practice to take advantage of muscles and tendons already being warmed up, getting rid of lactic acid. Good opportunity for the kids to relax before sending them home and a great time to focus on handing out praise.

## 14. Fundamentals, Fundamentals, Fundamentals

- a. You can never spend too much time on the basics. Fundamentals must become engrained in their muscle memory, so your players are doing, not thinking on the field.

## 15. Footwork

- a. The key to football is footwork, just like fundamentals, you can never practice this enough.

**16. Use Cones**

- a. Cones are great for this age group. Less confusion about boundaries and where they are supposed to go.

**17. Make it fun!**

- a. Your job as a coach is to make it fun and interesting and if you win along the way, great. Try to be creative at the end of practices to have competitions (silly competitions) team building competitions to build teamwork and have fun. (relay races, tag games, partner races, etc.)

**18. End practice/competition on a positive note.**

- a. At the end of practice or a competition, call in all the athletes and the parents. Ask the kids: "Who saw one of your teammates do something well?" The kids are good at answering this question. Then ask the parents, "Parents, what did you see that you liked?" This gives the parents a nice chance to recognize specific, positive things they saw, and it ends the practice/competition on a high note.

**19. Late season practices**

- a. Around the 3-6<sup>th</sup> week of football especially when school starts, typically that is when injuries start to occur. Go back to fundamentals and slow things down to avoid injuries.

**20. Coach, teach everyone**

- a. Anybody can coach the best player, that's not really coaching, you're just grabbing for the low hanging fruit. Getting the most out of every player is coaching.

**21. Yell Encouragement, Whisper Constructive Criticism**

- a. Keep it positive. As a youth football coach, you should never tolerate negative comments from your players, parents, coaching staff, and especially yourself. Kids realize when they have made mistakes. What they don't need is to have that mistake compounded by negative feedback and comments. What they do need is feedback on how to correct the mistake supported by positive encouragement.

**22. Feedback Sandwich**

- a. Before you give feedback or a correction to a player, give some positive encouragement before and after the feedback.
- b. For example: Tommy went out instead of in on his route during the game. In the result of this, the QB throws the ball to an open linebacker for an interception. Your response shouldn't be yelling at Tommy because he went the wrong direction. You should respond in a way like this,
  - i. "Tommy you did a great job coming off the line fast and hard. Just remember on that play you are supposed to go in and not out. Also, way to hustle after that interception!"

**23. Reminders are only useful before they are needed.**

- a. If a player makes a mental mistake because they forgot something, don't blame the player, blame yourself. You as a coach should always be giving reminders during practice and the game. These reminders can be on plays, fundamentals, and even a quick reminder of what the count is at the line of scrimmage. You telling a player "It was on two!" when they jump offside, doesn't help after the penalty. Remind them beforehand.

**24. Don't forget, this can be hard!**

- a. Most parents are surprised by how hard it is to feel successful coaching. We go in with very high expectations, and we don't have control over the outcome! You are not alone. Find other coaches who have been doing this for a while and share your challenges. They can serve as a wonderful resource.

**Basic Offensive skills your players should know**

- The Center/QB Exchange
- The Proper "Ready" Stance
- The QB/RB Exchange
- How to Carry the Football
- How to Properly Throw the Football
- How to Properly Catch the Football

**Basic Defensive skills your players should know**

- The proper "Ready" Stance
- Proper Footwork
- Proper Angles
- Flag Pulling
- Defensive Assignments and Alignments

**Stretches**



## Catching Techniques

### **Hand Placement**

- Balls thrown chest level and above
- Fingers on both hands reach for the sky spread apart.
- Both thumbs should touch and stay together throughout the catch.

### **Balls Thrown Below Chest Level**

- Fingers on both hands should extend down to the ground spread apart.
- Both pinkies should touch and stay together throughout the catch.

### **Arm Placement**

- Both arms should extend out to meet the thrown ball.
- Both arms should bring the thrown ball back to the body to secure football.

## Throwing Techniques

### **Hand Placement:**

- Place ball in your hand in a comfortable position, try to keep several fingers on the laces.
- There should be a pocket of air between the ball and your palm, ball should not be pressed against the palm.
- The index finger should be the last finger off the ball.

### **Arm Movement:**

- Bring the throwing hand above the shoulder when delivering the ball.
- Throwing hand should follow through and finish at the left pocket of a righthanded QB Back shoulder (throwing shoulder) finishing over front foot for proper weight transfer.
- Keep the non-throwing shoulder closed during throw.

### **Footwork:**

- Take short steps & strides back to set to throw.
- Weight should transfer onto front foot

## Securing the ball

When running and holding a football there should be 4 points of contact.

1. The front tip of the ball in the hand
2. The back tip of the ball between the arm pit
3. The outside of the ball inside the forearm
4. The inside of the ball against the chest.

The ball should never lose contact with any of those 4 points. The hand holding the ball, should be held up and near the side of the chin. When running, the ball should continue to be held high with the elbow driving up and down to maintain good running form and ball security at the same time. When transferring the ball from one arm to the next, you must keep the ball pressed against your chest and immediately establishing the four points of contact.

## **Running Routes**

A receiver must learn to keep their body under control while moving in different directions. In order to make a quick change in direction and get open for a pass, a receiver must be able to decelerate as well as be efficient in changing direction. Once a receiver begins to make a move, the movement should be sharp and precise. Rounding off runs allows the defense to recover. Towards the end of the route have your arms stretched out and towards the QB, presenting a good, large target for the QB to see.

## **Backpedaling**

This is a vital skill for a defender in flag football.

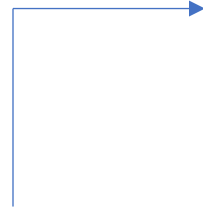
Here are the most important techniques to backpedaling

1. Staying low
  - a. In a deceleration type position
2. Head & shoulders over your feet at all times
  - a. This keeps a player's body well balanced, preventing him from falling back and losing his balance. This makes you well-prepared to make a move and follow a receiver once they break to catch a ball.
3. The player's arm movement must be quick with a proper movement (chin to pocket) and have 75% of their weight distributed onto the balls of their feet.

# Running Routes

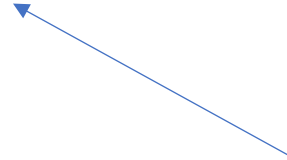
## **Quick Out (1):**

This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver cuts out towards the sideline then looks for the ball.



## **Slant (2):**

This is a 3-5 yard route forward then the receiver breaks towards the middle of the field on a 45 degree angle and looks for the ball



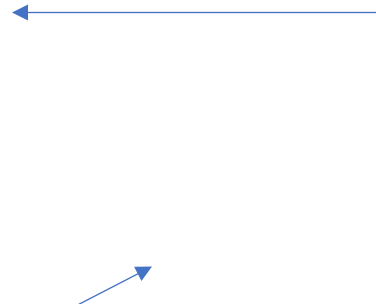
## **Deep Out (3):**

This is a 10-15 yard route.  
It should be run exactly like the quick out only deeper



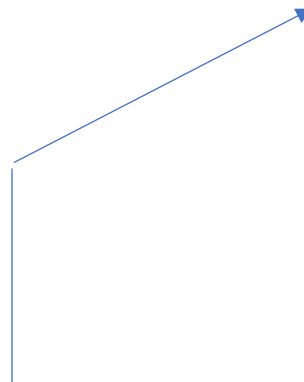
## **Drag / In (4):**

This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver breaks into the middle of the field on a 90 degree angle and looks for the ball



## **Flag (5):**

This is a 10-15 yard route forward then the receiver breaks at a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and looks for the ball



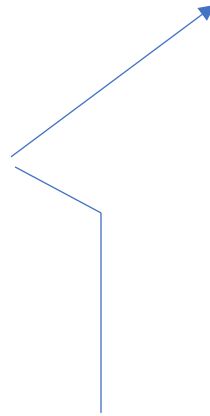
**Curl (6):**

This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver stops and turns to the ball.



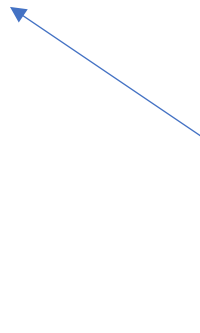
**Post Corner (7):**

This is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle to the middle of the field for a few steps then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and then looks for the ball.



**Post (8):**

This is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver breaks on a 45 degree angle towards the middle of the field and looks for the ball.



**Fly (9):**

This route is run straight up the field with the receiver looking for the ball after he gets past about 15 yards.





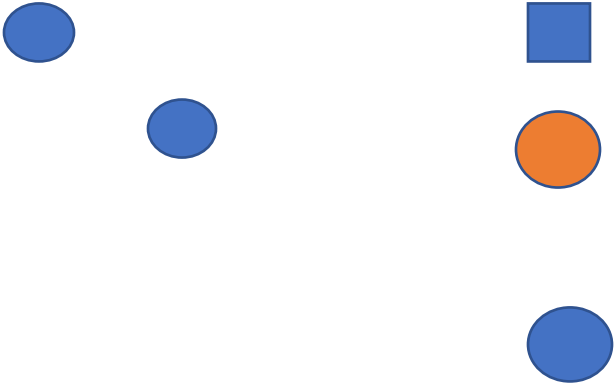
# Basic Formations

■ = Center

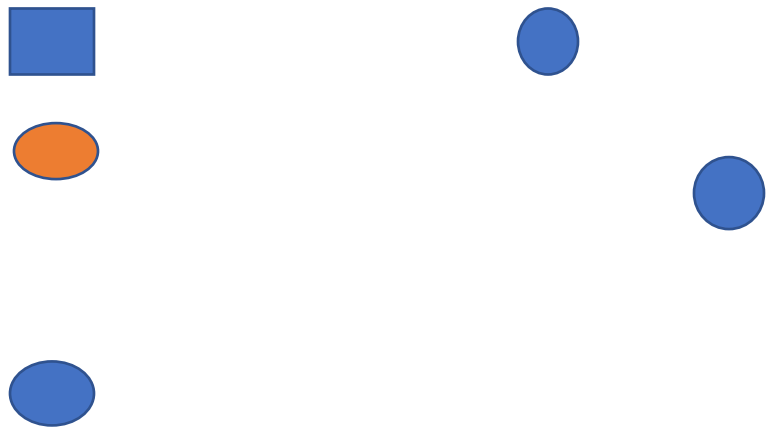
● = QB

● = WR / RB

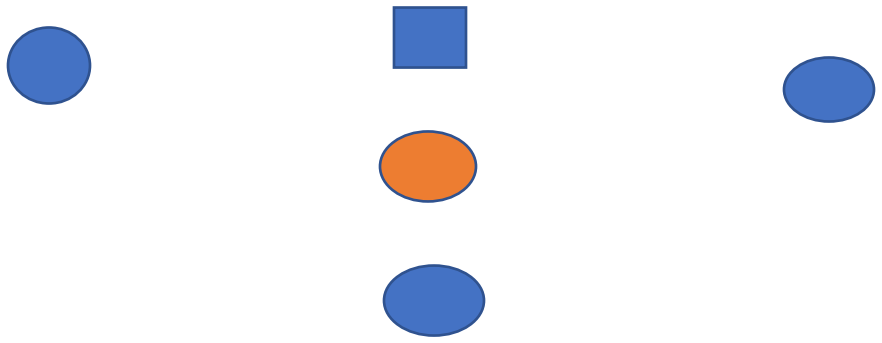
## Twins Right



## Twins Left



## Wing-Formation



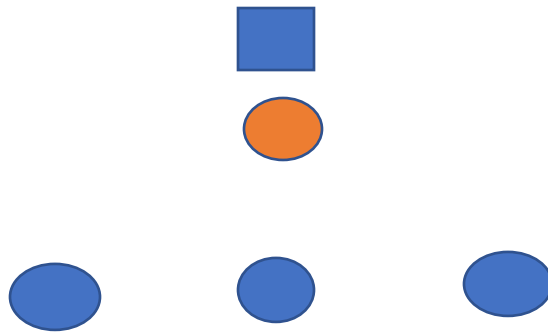
**Trips Left**



**Trips Right/Stacked**



**T-Formation**

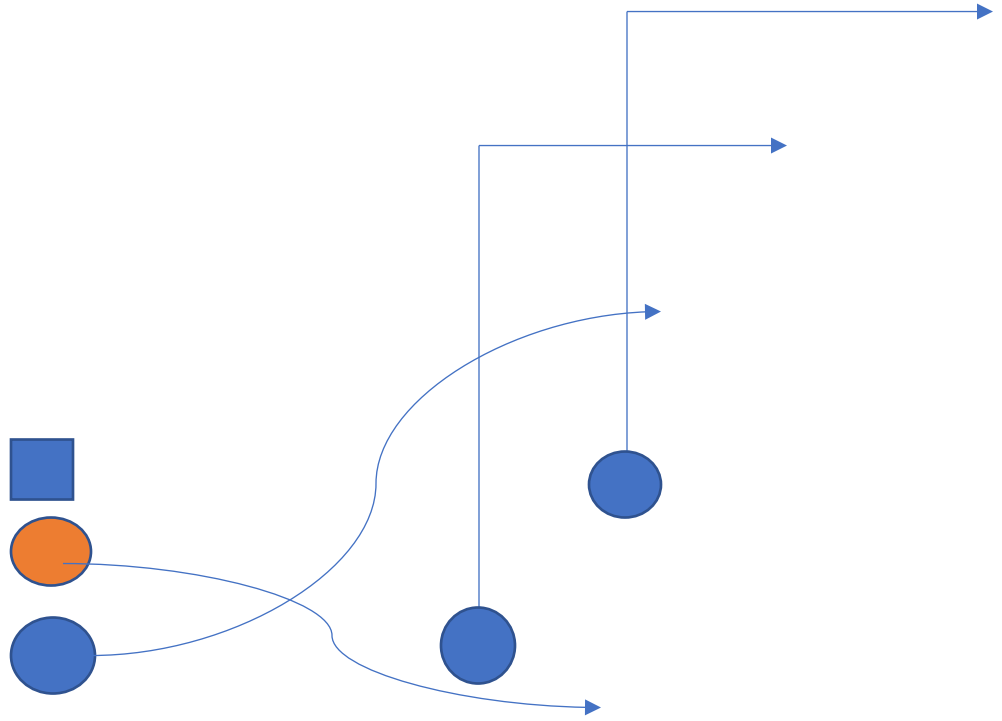


**I – Formation**

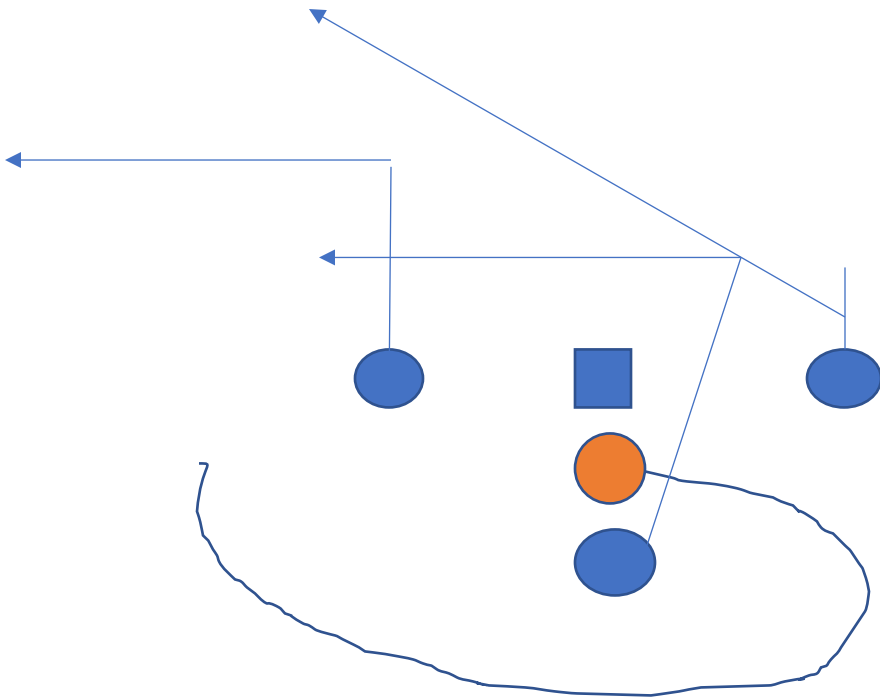


# Basic Plays

## Twins Right Flood



## Wing Formation Bootleg



## Twins Right – Quick Toss Left

