



ROOKIE TACKLE[®]
8-PLAYER RULE BOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Playing Field	3
8-Player Rules	4
Special Teams Adjustments	5
Offensive Adjustments	5
Defensive Adjustments	8
Scoring	11
Extended Field Option	12



THANK YOU ESPN

USA Football sincerely appreciates ESPN for the support of its Football Development Model

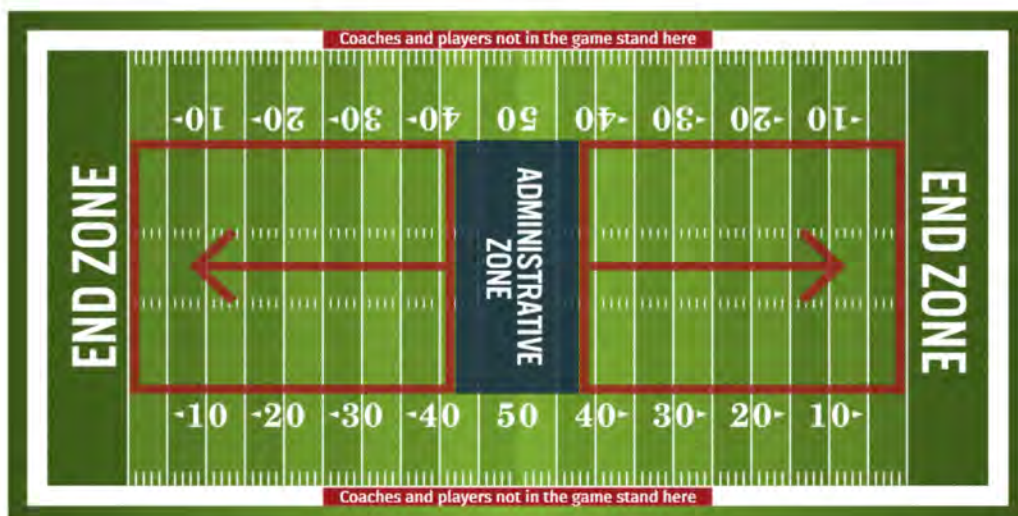
Copyright © 2020 USA Football

All rights reserved. Copying this work in whole or in part is prohibited without prior written consent from USA Football. Republication of all or any part of this, including on the Internet, is expressly prohibited.

ROOKIE TACKLE® 8-PLAYER RULES

Playing Field

1. The playing field is 40 x 35 1/3 yards, allowing for two fields to be created on a traditional 100-yard field at the same time.
2. The sidelines extend between the insides of the numbers on a traditional football field and should be marked with cones every five yards. Use traditional pylons, if available, to mark the goal line and the back line of the end zone.
3. Additional cones can be placed between the five-yard stripes and in line with the inside of the numbers to further outline the playing surface if desired.
4. All possessions start at the 40-yard line going toward the end zone.
 - a. This leaves a 20-yard buffer zone between the two game fields for game administration and safety purposes. Game officials, league personnel, athletic trainers and designated coaches are allowed in this space.
 - b. The offensive huddle may take place in the Administrative Zone.
 - c. Players not in the game stand on the traditional sidelines with one or more coach(es) to supervise.
 - d. The standard players' box should be used for sideline players. With the field split in two, this keeps players between the 25- and 40-yard line on each respective field and side.
5. First downs, down markers and the chain crew are administered in accordance with [National Federation of State High School Associations](#) (NFHS) or local rules – starting from the 40-yard line.



8-Player Rules

Rookie Tackle uses the NFHS rule book as a base and employs the following adjustments for 8-player football.

1. Because of the "all players, all positions, all skills" philosophy, there are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
 - a. Not all players may play every position every game or even through the course of the entire season. All players should have at least one offensive and defensive line position, as well as one offensive and one defensive backfield position to play each game.
 - b. In practice, players should learn all skills of all positions for developmental purposes in accordance with the [Football Development Model principles](#).
2. All game action takes place on one half of the field with all possessions starting on the 40-yard line going toward the end zone.
3. A turnover on downs brings the ball back to the 40-yard line, and the teams switch sides from offense to defense, defense to offense.
4. Turnovers on interceptions or turnovers on fumbles are blown dead immediately. No returns are allowed in order to protect players from running toward the 20-yard Administrative Zone between the two fields. Play restarts on the 40-yard line with the recovering/intercepting team now on offense. There are no defensive touchdowns.
 - a. Rule application: A fumble is not blown dead, only a turnover. A fumble is a live ball until it is recovered by a player, lands out of bounds or approaches the Administrative Zone and officials determine the play should be blown dead.
 - i. Defensive recoveries, as turnovers, are blown dead.
 - ii. An offensive player may recover and advance a fumble.
5. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. Hash marks are not used.
6. Because of the limited field size, all 15-yard penalties are enforced as 10-yard penalties.
7. No penalty on the offense can take the ball beyond the 40-yard line to ensure the Administrative Zone is free.
 - a. Rule application: A five-yard penalty called and accepted on the 38-yard line would result in a loss of two yards and the ball spotted on the 40-yard line.
8. Penalties on the offense called between the 40-yard line and the end zone in which yardage is lost, even if limited in enforcement by the 40-yard line, are enforced as written in terms of down lost or replayed.
9. Penalties on the offense that are called and accepted on or behind the 40-yard line result in a loss of down. A penalty that would normally include a loss of down would not result in a second loss of down on the same play.

-
10. There are no defensive safeties. Tackles behind the 40-yard line are respotted at the 40-yard line with the offense still retaining the ball as long as a down remains.
 11. All personal foul penalties include an immediate required substitution from the field for a minimum of one play to allow coaches to address misconduct and promote good sportsmanship. We call this a "cooling off period."
 - a. If a team does not have any substitutes for the game, coaches and officials should discuss during the pregame meeting how to apply league standards for this situation.
 12. All plays are blown dead and the ball is returned to the 40-yard line if an offensive ball-carrier or a fumbled ball crosses over midfield (50-yard line) or, at the official's discretion, if the action of the play penetrates too deeply into the Administrative Zone.

Special Teams Adjustments

1. There are no special teams.
 - a. There are no kickoffs or punts. Each possession starts with the ball on the 40-yard line, regardless of whether there is a score, turnover or turnover on downs.
 - b. There are no extra points by a kick.
 - i. All PATs are attempted through a run or pass try. Coaches can choose to go for one point from the 3-yard line or two points from the 5-yard line.

Offensive Adjustments

1. Each play must include three offensive linemen – a center and two guards, one on either side of the center. These players are ineligible for first touch as the receiver of a pass.
 - a. Player rotations may result with traditional non-lineman numbers at these positions for the purpose of fundamental skill development.



2. Guards are required to play from a two-point stance. There are no three-point stances.

3. The center may only have his or her snapping hand down.
4. The distance between a guard and center may not exceed three feet (one yard) but may be closer.
5. Because of the “all players, all positions, all skills” philosophy, players should change positions during the game. Therefore:
 - a. The three offensive linemen must identify themselves on each play by raising their hands as they break the huddle and approach the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Once identified as an offensive lineman, players may not shift to another position.
 - c. All three offensive linemen are ineligible for first touch on a pass.
6. The quarterback-center exchange may be direct, pistol or shotgun.
7. Quarterback sneaks are prohibited in all situations because the defense is not allowed to have players aligned over the center or in the center-guard A-gap.
8. The offense must have five players on the line of scrimmage. No more, no less. The fourth and fifth players can be tight ends, split ends or a combination of the two. Only the two end players on the line of scrimmage are eligible for first touching of a pass.
9. There are no unbalanced lines. The split ends/tight ends must be on opposite sides of the center.



or



or

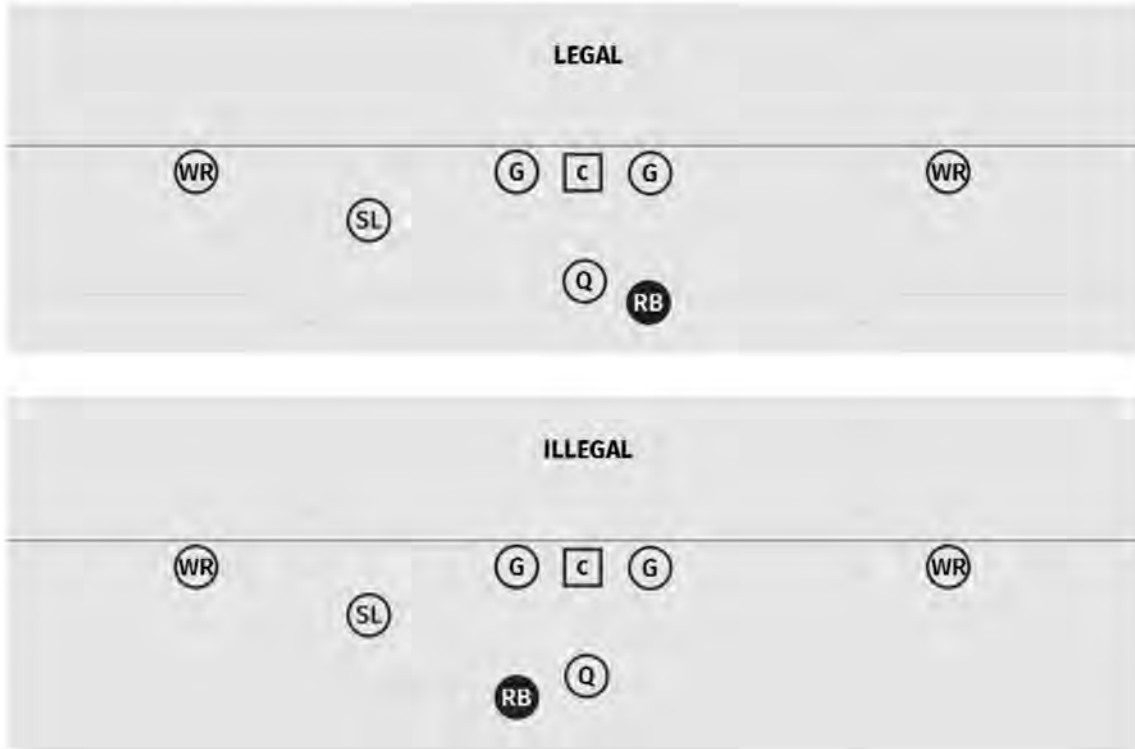


10. The five offensive players who are not playing guard or center may be deployed in positions at the coach's discretion as long as two are on the line of scrimmage.

a. Multiple running backs, slot receivers, wing backs, etc., are allowed but also must be balanced.

11. No trips formations are allowed.

a. For purpose of Rookie Tackle, trips is defined as any three players outside the guard-to-guard box on the same side of the ball.



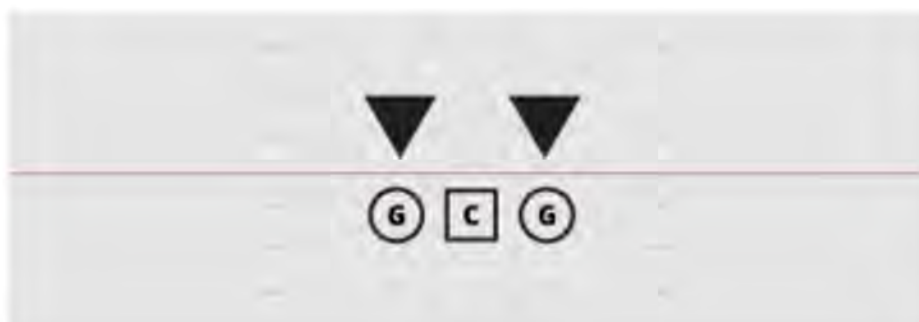
12. Motion is allowed as long as it does not form a trips formation.

13. All blocks below the waist by any player anywhere on the field are illegal.

Defensive Adjustments

1. Defenses may only have two defensive linemen unless an offensive formation includes a tight end. In that case, a third defensive player may line up over the tight end. Two tight ends allow the defense to use four defensive players on the line of scrimmage.

Base



One tight end



Two tight ends

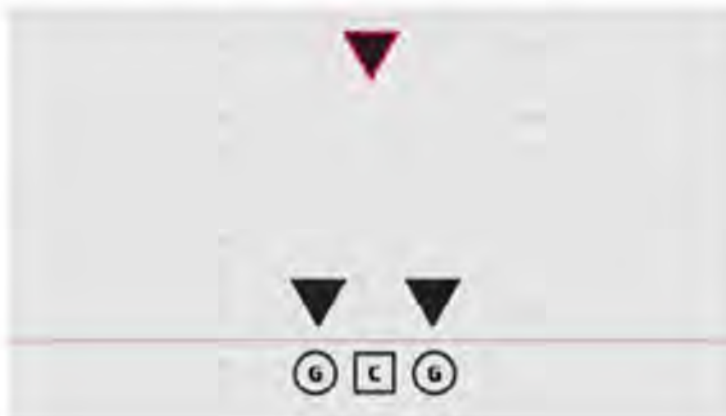


2. Defensive linemen must be in a two-point stance.
3. Defensive linemen must be aligned on the guards and/or tight ends in a head up or outside shade position.
4. Players in an outside shade must always have one foot aligned inside the stance of the opposing player.

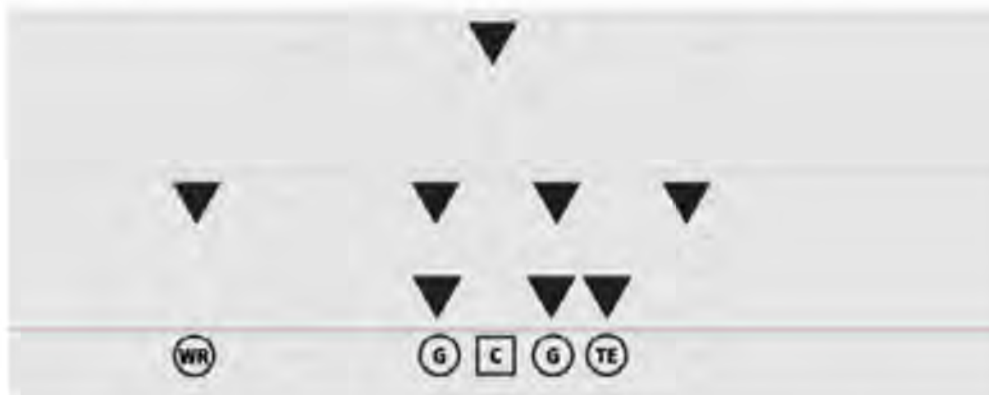
-
5. Defensive line of scrimmage players may not penetrate the A-gap on the snap of the ball. Contact with the hands must be made with the offensive line player before defeating the block into the A-gap.
 - a. Rule enforcement: Deliberate stunting into the A-gap is to be treated as an illegal procedure foul and enforced as a five-yard live ball penalty.
 6. If the offense aligns with no tight ends, the defense may still align with four players on the line of scrimmage, but they must be positioned over the receivers they are covering.
 - a. With the exception of the players covering the guards, the defense is not required to have additional players on the line of scrimmage but has the option to do so.



7. The defense must have one player at least 10 yards from the ball.



-
8. All remaining players not on the line of scrimmage or at ten-yard deep safety must be a minimum of four yards off of the line of scrimmage.
- a. Defenses that choose to not match the eligible receivers on the line of scrimmage may position those players on the second level as long as they are at least four yards from the line of scrimmage.



9. No blitzes are allowed. Players within the box at the snap can penetrate upon the snap. Linebackers, safeties and cornerbacks (both on the line and at depth) can flow to the ball naturally after a handoff is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
- a. The box includes offensive players who line up within two yards of the ball and on the line of scrimmage along with the defensive players lined up directly over them.
 - i. Rule application: The restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
 - ii. Rule enforcement: Illegal blitzes by a linebacker or defensive back shall be enforced as an illegal procedure foul and a five-yard live ball penalty. If continued blitzing is determined to be a product of coach encouragement, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty can occur.
 - b. On pass plays, anyone outside the box on the snap cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage.
 - c. Coaches are encouraged to be creative with their formations, but should not use “the box” to delay defensive penetration.
10. If the ball is inside the four-yard line, the four non-linemen, non-deep players may align on the goal line.

Scoring

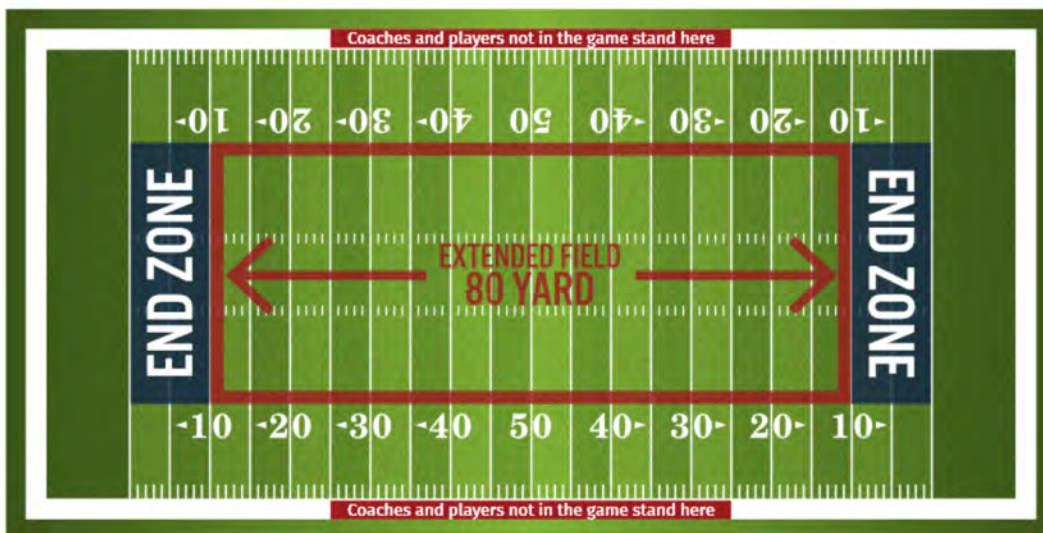
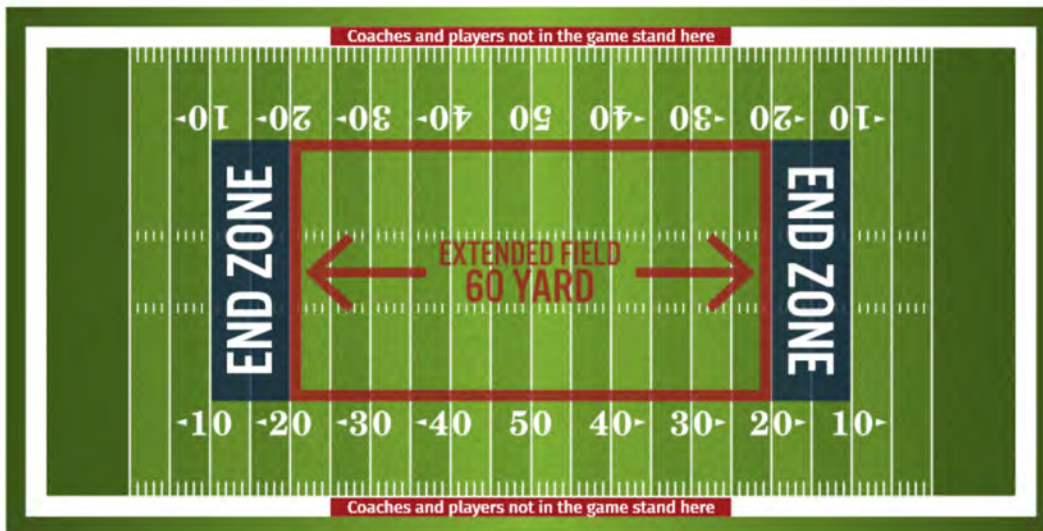
1. Offensive touchdowns are worth six points.
2. PATs are the coach's choice to attempt a one-point try from the 3-yard line or a two-point try from the 5-yard line.
3. With no special teams, there are no field goal attempts.
4. There are no defensive touchdowns as all turnovers are blown dead immediately. No returns are allowed to limit play back in the direction of the Administrative Zone
 - Fumbles are not turnovers. It is only a turnover if recovered by the defense as the offense is allowed to attempt to recover it.
5. There are no two-point defensive safeties. All tackles behind the 40-yard line result in a loss of down, but the offense retains the ball, and the ball is respotted at the 40-yard line to preserve the Administrative Zone.

EXTENDED FIELD OPTION

An extended field option is available for Rookie Tackle that allows play in both directions. The chart below outlines the rule modifications for this extended field option.

RULE	ROOKIE TACKLE	EXTENDED FIELD ROOKIE TACKLE
Field length	40-yards with one end zone (play goes one-direction)	60-80 yards with two end zones (play goes both directions)
Field width	Not to exceed 40 yards wide	Not to exceed 40 yards wide
Players per side	6, 7 or 8	6, 7 or 8
Possession starts on	40-yard line for all changes of possession	25-yard line after score/safety/beginning of half or where previous drive ended (play goes both directions)
Coaches in huddle	Yes	Yes
Dead ball on turnover	Yes	No
Kickoffs/punts	No Special Teams	No Special Teams
Field goals/kicked extra points	None	None
Extra points	1 point from 3-yard line; 2 points from 3-yard line	1 point from 3-yard line; 2 points from 3-yard line
Hash marks	Not used	Not used
15-yard penalties	Marked as 10 yards	Marked as 10 yards
Safeties	Ball returns to 40-yard line	Ball is placed on 25-yard line following a safety
QB sneak into A gap	Not allowed	Not allowed
Blitzing	Not allowed	Not allowed
Defensive stunt or slant to A-gap	Not allowed	Not allowed
3-point stance	No	No
Offensive formations	No trips allowed	No trips allowed
Play clock	35 seconds from ready-to-play whistle	35 seconds from ready-to-play whistle
Blocking below the waist	Not allowed in any instance	Not allowed in any instance
Defense line up in A gap	Not allowed	Not allowed
A runner with the ball MUST make an evasive move if considered to be in the open field.	Yes	Yes

EXTENDED FIELD OPTION



** THIS MANUAL REPRESENTS PRACTICE AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES BASED ON OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE. RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS MORE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE. **