

Football positions



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Center(Offence) The center is the player who begins the play from scrimmage by snapping the ball to a back. As the name suggests, the center usually plays in the middle of the offensive line, though some teams may employ an unbalanced line where the center is offset to one side or another. Like all offensive lineman, the center has the responsibility to block defensive players. The center often also has the responsibility to call out blocking assignments and make last second adjustments depending on the defensive alignment.

Guard(Offence) Two guards line up directly on either side of the center. Like all interior linemen, their function is to block on both running and passing plays. On some plays, rather than blocking straight ahead, a guard will " pull", whereby the guard comes out of his position in line to lead block for a ball carrier, on plays known as " traps" (for inside runs), or " sweeps" (for outside runs), or " screens" (for passing plays)

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Tackle(Offense) Two tackles play outside of the guards. Their role is primarily to block on both running and passing plays. The area from one tackle to the other is an area of " close line play" in which blocks from behind, which are prohibited elsewhere on the field, are allowed. For a right-handed quarterback, the left tackle is charged with protecting the quarterback from being hit from behind (known as his " blind side"), and this is usually the most skilled player on the offensive line. Like a guard, the tackle may have to " pull," on a running play, when there is a tight end on his side.

Quarterback(Offense) The quarterback is the player who receives the ball from the center to start the play. The most important position on the offensive side, the quarterback is usually responsible for receiving the play from the coaches on the sideline and communicating the play to the other

offensive players in the huddle. The quarterback may need to make changes to the play at the line of scrimmage (known as an "audible"), depending on the defensive alignment. At the start of the play, the quarterback may be lined up in one of three positions. If he is positioned directly in contact with the center, and receives the ball via direct hand-to-hand pass, he is said to be "under center". If he is lined up some distance behind the center, he is said to be "in the shotgun". He can also be in between. This is called a "pistol" formation. Upon receiving the snap, the quarterback has three basic options to advance the ball. He may run the ball himself, he may hand it to another eligible ball carrier to run with it, or he may execute a forward pass to a player downfield.

Running Back(Offense) Running backs are players who line up behind the offensive line, who are in position to receive the ball from the quarterback and execute a rushing play. Anywhere from one to three running backs may be utilized on a play (or even none, a situation typically known as an "empty backfield"). Depending on where they line up, and what role they have, running backs come in several varieties. The "tailback" (or sometimes the "halfback", though this term is somewhat archaic) is often a team's primary ball carrier on rushing plays. They may also catch passes, often acting as a "checkdown" or "safety valve" when all other receivers on a pass play are covered. The "fullback" is often larger and stronger than the tailback, and acts primarily as a blocker, though the fullback may also be used for catching passes or for rushing as a tailback does. Fullbacks often line up closer to the line of scrimmage than tailbacks do, so they may block for them. A "wingback" or a "slotback" is a term for a running back who lines up behind the line of scrimmage outside the tackle or tight end on the side where positioned. Slotbacks are usually only found in certain offensive

alignments, such as the flexbone formation. A similar position, known as the H-back, is actually considered a modification of the normal tight end position.

Wide Receiver(Offense) The wide receivers are pass-catching specialists. Their main job is to run pass routes and get open for a pass, although they are occasionally called on to block. Wide receivers generally line up split " wide" near the sidelines at the start of the play. Wide receivers, like running backs, come in different varieties depending on exactly where they line up. A wide receiver who is directly on the line of scrimmage is called a " split end", and is counted among the seven required players on the line of scrimmage. A wide receiver who lines up behind the line (and thus counts as one of the four backs) is called the " flanker". A wide receiver who lines up between the outermost wide receiver and the offensive line is said to be " in the slot" and is called the " slot receiver".

Tight End(Offense) Tight ends play on either side of, and directly next to, the tackles. Tight ends are considered hybrid players, something between a wide receiver and an offensive lineman. Because they play next to the other offensive lineman, they are frequently called on to block, especially on running plays. However, because they are eligible receivers, they may also catch passes. The position known as the H-back is a tight end who lines up behind the line of scrimmage, and is thus counted as one of the four " backs", but otherwise his role is similar to that of other tight ends.

Defensive Guard(Defense) Sometimes called a defensive guard, defensive tackles play at the center of the defensive line. Their function is to rush the passer (if they can get past the offensive linemen blocking them), and stop running plays directed at the middle of the line of scrimmage. A defensive tackle who lines up directly across from the ball (and therefore is almost nose-to-nose with the offense's

center) is often called a nose tackle or nose guard. The nose tackle is most common in the 3-4 defense. Most defensive sets have one or two defensive tackles. Defensive End(Defense) The two defensive ends play next to the defensive tackles, at the edges of the defensive line. Their function is to attack the passer or stop offensive runs to the outer edges of the line of scrimmage (most often referred to as "containment"). The faster of the two is usually placed on the right side of the defensive line (quarterback's left) because that is a right-handed quarterback's blind side. Middle Linebacker(Defense) Sometimes called the "inside linebacker" (especially in a 3-4 defense), and known colloquially as the "Mike" linebacker, the middle linebacker is often known as the "quarterback of the defense", as they are frequently the primary defensive play callers and must react to a wide variety of situations. Middle linebackers must be capable of stopping running backs who make it past the defensive line, covering pass plays over the middle, and rushing the quarterback on blitz plays. Outside Linebacker(Defense) Outside linebackers are given different names depending on their role and the philosophy of the team. Some teams keep their outside linebackers on the same side of the field at all times, and thus they are known as "right outside" (ROLB) and "left outside" (LOLB). Some teams define them by their role; as playing either "strongside" (SLB) or "weaksides" (WLB). The strongside, or "Sam", linebacker lines up on the same side as the offensive tight end and often is responsible for covering the tight end or running back on pass plays. The weakside, or "Will", linebacker lines up on the side of the offensive line without a tight end, and is often used to rush, or blitz the quarterback, or may need to cover a running back on pass plays. Cornerback(Defense) Typically two players primarily cover the wide

receivers. Cornerbacks attempt to prevent successful quarterback passes by either swatting the airborne ball away from the receiver or by catching the pass themselves. In rushing situations, their job is to contain the runner, either by directing him back to the middle of the field to be tackled, by tackling him themselves, or by forcing him out of bounds.

Safety(Defense) The safeties are the last line of defense (farthest from the line of scrimmage) and usually help the corners with deep-pass coverage. The strong safety (SS) is usually the larger and stronger of the two, providing extra protection against run plays by standing closer to the line of scrimmage, usually on the strong (tight end) side of the field. The free safety (FS) is usually the smaller and faster of the two, and is usually the deepest player on the defense, providing help on long pass plays.

Kicker(Special Teams) Also called the "placekicker", he handles kickoffs, extra points, and field goal attempts. All three situations require the kicker to kick the ball off of the ground, either from the hands of a "holder" or off of a "tee". Some teams will employ two kickers: one kicks extra points and field goals, and the other kicks kickoffs and occasionally long field-goal attempts. Most however use a single kicker for both jobs, and rarely, the same player may also punt.

Punter(Special Teams) Punting requires the player to drop the ball from their hand and kick it from the air. It is done to relinquish possession to the defensive team. Punting is usually only done on fourth down.

Offense eleven players of the offense are broken into two groups: the five offensive linemen, whose primary job is to block, and the six backs and receivers whose primary job is to advance the ball by means of either running with the ball or passing it. The backs and receivers are also commonly known as skill position players or as

eligible ball carriers (offensive linemen are not normally eligible to advance the ball during each play).

The organization of the offense is strictly mandated by the rules; there must be at least seven players on the line of scrimmage and no more than four players (known collectively as "backs") behind it on every play. The only players eligible to handle the ball during a normal play are the backs and the two players on the end of the line (the "ends"). The remaining players (known as "interior linemen") are considered "ineligible", and may only block. Within these strictures, however, creative coaches have developed a wide array of offensive formations to take advantage of different player skills and game situations.

Offensive LineThe offensive line is primarily responsible for blocking. During normal play, offensive linemen do not handle the ball (aside from the snap from center), unless the ball is fumbled by a ball carrier, or when a player who is normally an offensive lineman takes a different position on the field.

Backs and ReceiversThe six backs and receivers are those that line up outside or behind the offensive line. There are four main positions in this set of players

DefenseUnlike the offensive team, the rules do not restrict the defensive team into certain positions. A defensive player may line up anywhere on his side of the line of scrimmage and perform any legal action.

Over time, however, defensive roles have become defined into three main sets of players, and several individual positions. **Defensive Line**Like their offensive counterparts, defensive linemen line up directly on the line of scrimmage, close to the ball. There are two positions usually considered part of the defensive line: defensive tackle and defensive end. Often, though not

always, a defensive lineman will have his "hand(s) on the ground," in a three- or four-point stance before the ball is snapped; this distinguishes his pre-snap stance from a linebacker, who begins in a two-point stance (i. e. without a hand touching the ground). LinebackersLinebackers play behind the defensive line and perform various duties depending on the situation, including rushing the passer, covering receivers, and defending against the run. Defensive BacksDefensive backs, also known as the "secondary", play either behind the linebackers or set to the outside, near the sidelines.

Defensive backs are primarily used to defend against pass plays, by covering wide receivers and tight ends to prevent them from catching the ball, or to attempt to intercept the pass from the quarterback. Defensive backs also act as the last line of defense on running plays, and need to be able to make open field tackles, especially when the ball carrier has gotten past the other defenders. A normal complement of defensive backs includes two cornerbacks and two safeties, though specialty defensive backs (nickelbacks and dimebacks) can be brought in in place of linebackers and defensive lineman, when there is need to cover additional pass receivers. Special TeamsSpecial teams are units that are on the field during kicking plays. While many players who appear on offensive or defensive squads also play similar roles on special teams (offensive linemen to block, or defensive players to tackle) there are some specialist roles which are unique to the kicking game.