



FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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PLAYER ▶▶▶▶ PROGRESSION GUIDE

8+ DEVELOP & ACHIEVE

Overview
Developmental Checklist
Skills



8+

**DEVELOP &
ACHIEVE**

WHAT IS DEVELOP AND ACHIEVE?

This stage is designed for athletes 8+. Athletes at this stage are really beginning to develop and refine their movement ABCs – agility, balance, coordination, strength and speed. At the same time, they are beginning to understand sport-specific skills at a deeper level as they learn to compete against others in a fun, challenging environment.

Through various games and activities, athletes at this age can begin to work within a team concept while developing positive attributes of character and leadership.

Practices should be fun and focus on development and opportunities. Some athletes mature sooner than their peers, while others remain both physically and emotionally immature.

Many players at this age are starting to become more cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses. With that in mind, it is very important for you – as the coach – to manage matchups during both practices and games.

A less-skilled athlete who is overmatched on a consistent basis may begin to lose confidence. This can lead to frustration. If this isn't addressed, it may lead them to leave the sport.

On the flip side, an athlete with more refined skills who can exploit matchups may gain consistent success, but is not improving as rapidly as he or she would against someone of equal ability.

All skills developed during these formative years will continue to establish a foundation for success in football and for sport in general. Sport-specific skills like throwing, catching, running, ball-handling, hip tracking and footwork will most certainly transfer across activities and game-types. Focus on developing great athletes who may then become great football players.

› **Reminder: Using this guide**

Throughout this Player Progression Guide, you'll find drills. You can find descriptions of these drills in the glossary on page 73.

STAGE DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Checkpoints are based on the **CORE** technical skill areas of the Football Development Model. These are checkpoints for mastery.

Athlete will be able to...

Passing (Using a developmentally appropriate-sized football)



- Complete the throwing motion with proper hip and shoulder rotation, staying on balance with proper follow-through
- Throw for distance and accuracy to a stationary target (10+ yards)
- Throw with accuracy to a moving target (5+ yards)

Running and Receiving (Using a developmentally appropriate-sized football)



- Demonstrate continuous movement through the catch (i.e., not stopping to catch the ball)
- Consistently catch a ball thrown above the head, at chest level, and below the waist
- Adjust body position and hands based on the flight of the thrown ball
- Demonstrate evasive movement skills while maintaining body control, balance and ball security

Kicking and Punting (Using a developmentally appropriate-sized ball or football)



- Demonstrate the ability to kick “through” the ball for both punting and kicking (i.e., demonstrate follow-through, kick with power)
- With a running or multi-step approach, kick a stationary ball in the air (10+ yards)
- Punt a football with distance accuracy (10+ yards)

Athletic Foundations



- Perform running actions using proper foot strike, appropriate body lean and demonstrate the hip/arm/body mechanics associated with acceleration
- Gallop and shuffle in various directions on the balls of the feet without feet touching
- Jump and Hop in different directions and with varying degrees of force
- Demonstrate proper landing mechanics after jumping
- Maintain balance in different body orientations
- Demonstrate movement transitions (run to shuffle, jump to skip, roll to hop, gallop to skip, etc. ...)
- Run a prescribed pattern

Thinking, Feeling and Behavior



- Demonstrate the ability to follow instructions
- Understand the basic rules of the game and the concept of fair play
- Demonstrate basic coping skills for handling success and failure
- Take other people’s feelings into consideration





PASSING

SKILL ELEMENTS AND KPIS

Below are skills that build the Passing progression. Each step of the progression has Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and drills that help coaches train and improve passing skills. Drill descriptions can be found in this guide's glossary.

1 PRE-PASS POSITION

- ✓ The body, grip and arm position prior to the throwing motion beginning. Creating a solid base from which to throw by having feet shoulder width apart, ball centered at chest, with a firm grip on the ball.

KPI(s):

Grip

- Fingers on laces
- One finger of space between palm and ball

Base

- Feet shoulder-width apart
- Weight on the instep
- Hips inside the heels

Ball Carriage

- Ball properly secured in both hands
- Arms relaxed at the sides of the body
- Ball centered at the sternum



Drills to Support

- Meet in the Middle Grip Drill
- 1-Step Drop and Throw
- Cross Plant and Throw
- Hips Inside the Heels
- Cleats in the Grass

2 POSTURE

- ✓ A comfortable neutral posture as the throwing motion begins. Gained by dropping the hips, having a gentle bend in the knees and a very slight lean forward at the waist.

KPI(s):

Neutral Posture

- Slight bend in the knees
- Slight forward lean
- Weight on the instep
- Lead shoulder pointed at the target

Hips

- Hips dropped
- Load through the hips
- Slight forward lean



Drills to Support

- Hip Drops
- Lunge with a Twist
- Mirror Drill
- Trunk Rotation Throws (feet parallel to target)
- Hip Flips from Standing Position

3 THROWING MECHANICS

- ✓ The movements that make up a successful throw and the ability to coordinate those movements throughout the throwing motion.

 **KPI(s):**
Fluidity

- Throw the ball in single, fluid motion
- Use proper arm path

Separation

- Hands break equal and opposite each other
- Hands break at a horizontal “L” angle

Symmetry

- Hands and elbows mirror each other during separation
- Horizontal “L” to vertical “L”
- Elbow even with or slightly below the shoulder

**Drills to Support**

- Palms Up Small Arm Circles to Large Arm Circles (clockwise and counter-clockwise)
- Arm Flaps (internal/external rotation)
- Arm Slaps/Hugs
- Horizontal “L” to Vertical “L” Drill
- Ultimate Football
- Clockwork Hands Passing
- Stationary Throws
- 4 to Score
- 5-Yard Quick Game

4 FINISH

- The body position and follow through after the ball is released.

 **KPI(s):**
Balance

- Front foot flat on the stride
- Back foot finishes even with or slightly behind the front foot
- Look for stability in the finish

Deceleration

- Front toe to the target
- Look for stability in the finish
- Don't over-rotate the upper body

**Drills to Support**

- Towel Drills (with football in off-hand)
- Thumb to Pocket
- Straddle the Line Drill (line between feet)

> TIPS FOR COACHES**Coaches should keep the following things in mind...**

- Always start with the grip
- Nose of the football is always slightly up when the throwing arm is at 90 degrees
- 1 finger space between the ball and the palm of the hand
- Ball carriage position should be relaxed, central (sternum), and stable
- Firm wrist position
- Drop the hips don't bend the knees
- Weight should be on instep
- Back foot should finish even with front foot (or slightly behind)
- Don't lock out the front knee
- Front toe to the target on finish
- Front foot flat on the stride



RUNNING AND RECEIVING

SKILL ELEMENTS AND KPIS

Below are skills that build the Running and Receiving progression. Each step of the progression has Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and drills that help coaches train and improve running and receiving skills. Drill descriptions can be found in this guide's glossary.

1 FEET/FOOTWORK

- ✓ Preparing the body from the ground up by making sure feet are positioned appropriately in preparation for, during and after the catch or handoff.

KPI(s):

Stance

- Two-point stance
- Equal weight distribution
- No false (extra) steps
- Inside foot forward

Start

- No false steps
- Push off the front leg
- Hip drive from the back leg
- Proper foot strike
- Contralateral arm motion aligns with lower body movement

Balance

- Accelerate and decelerate with body control
- Maintain body control within different body orientations

Tempo

- Stop and go with body control
- Adjust speed to the needs of the competitive scenario



Drills to Support

- Zig-zag Pathway
- Stance and Start
- Stop-and-Go Flow
- Curved Pathway
- Acceleration Drills
- Deceleration Drills
- Lateral Pathway
- Multi Directional Get Up and Go (acceleration mechanics)
- Dual Leg Dominance
- Zig-zag Tag

2 ARMS/HANDS

- ✓ Preparing and positioning the fingers, hands and arms to complete a successful catch or handoff.

KPI(s):

Arm/Hand Position

- Hands up, fingers spread (Receiving)
- Make a diamond shape with the hands (Receiving)
- Arms against the body to create a pocket for the handoff (Running)
- Near arm up during handoff (Running)

Catch Radius

- Adjust hands/arms based on flight of the ball (Receiving)

Long Arms

- Extend hands/arms towards the ball (Receiving)
- Catch the ball at the highest point (Receiving)

**Drills to Support**

- Catch and Step with Partner
- Globetrotter
- Clockwork Hands
- 5-yard Quick Game (hitch, slant, in, out)
- Long Arm Drill
- High Ball Drill

3 VISION

Tracking the football through the air and into the hands. Learning to focus through distraction and with the body in various orientations

**KPI(s):****Locate**

- Get the head around (Receiving)
- Find the ball (Receiving)
- Eyes up, looking ahead (Running)

Track

- Focus on the tip of ball (Receiving)
- Judge depth and distance of the ball (Receiving)
- Have track discipline - stay on your track (Running)

**Drills to Support**

Progressive Turn and Catch
Over-the-Shoulder Catches
Number Call-outs
Gap Drill
Mesh
Mesh with Stepover
Mesh Read and React
Toss Drill

4 FINISH

Movement through and following the catch or handoff, transferring the football from catch or handoff to tuck and assuming correct ball-carrying position.

**KPI(s):****Ball Security**

- 5 points of pressure
- Ball in the outside arm

Transition

- See the ball through the tuck
- Feel the ball on the stomach
- Clamp down on the ball during the handoff (Running)

**Drills to Support**

- Catch, Wrap and Step
- Catch, Wrap and Go
- Outside Arm
- Coaches Knockout
- Partner Knockout

> TIPS FOR COACHES

Coaches should keep the following things in mind...

- Encourage linear movement and activity
- Introduce an athletic two-point wide receiver stance
- Encourage zig-zagged running paths
- Introduce an athletic two-point running back stance
- Continue to encourage free play, running/movement and games
- Introduce catching with the hands
- Emphasize catching with arms fully extended
- Coach players to focus on the tip of the ball
- Introduce the ability to be able to carry the ball in both arms

> LOOKING FOR CONTACT SKILLS OR PRACTICE PLANS?

Make sure for the USA Football's Contact Manual, which is coming soon. [Click here](#) to view the sample practice plans available in another resource online.

“ I do believe in the Football Development Model. In looking at it and going through it, you're focusing on working with the athletes to progress and develop athletic movements. How to throw a ball. How to catch a ball.”

Brian Pritts
*Full-Field 11-Player Tackle Coach,
Washington Greene Youth Football League (PA)*



KICKING AND PUNTING

SKILL ELEMENTS AND KPIS

Below are skills that build the Kicking and Punting progression. Each step of the progression has Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and drills that help coaches train and improve kicking and punting skills.

1 PREPARE

- ✓ The stance and approach prior to making contact to the ball with the foot.

KPI(s):

Body Position

- Proper lean and balance
- Stable base

Footwork

- Approach the ball with coordinated movement

Plant Foot

- Plant foot positioned even with the ball
- Point plant foot in the direction of the kick



Drills to Support

- One-Step Kicks
- Two-Step Kicks
- Partner Kicks
- Partner Punts

2 CONTACT MECHANICS

- ✓ The movements that make up a successful kick/punt up to and at the point of contact. The ability to coordinate these movements throughout the kicking/punting motion.

KPI(s):

Eye-foot Coordination

- Maintain vision on contact point through connection

Foot Position

- Shoelaces connect with the ball

Drop

- Drop the ball, don't toss it



Drills to Support

- No-Step Kick Drill
- Contact Dots Drill
- Around the Post Drill

3 POWER

- ✓ Using multiple muscles and leg speed to generate strength behind the kick in order to achieve longer distance and/or height.

KPI(s):

Leg-Swing

- Generates force at the point of contact

Drills to Support

- Backswing Drill
- Swing Balance Drill
- Kick Return Tag
- Punt Return Tag

4 FINISH

- The drive and follow-through that completes the kicking motion.

KPI(s):

Follow-Through

- Maintain balance through contact
- Follows up and through towards the target

Leg Drive

- Fluid motion from first step through follow through

Drills to Support

- Balance Kicks
- Punt 500
- Walk the Line Kick/Punt

> TIPS FOR COACHES

Coaches should keep the following things in mind...

- Feel free to play any fun games that involve kicking a ball
- Encourage the kicking motion to be fluid and on balance
- Be outcome-based not performance-based
- Use of a developmentally sized ball is vital
- Ball contact point on the foot is the shoelaces
- Contact point for the place-kick is slightly below the center of the ball
- Contact point for the punt is the center sweet-spot of the football
- Follow through with extension upward and toward the target



ATHLETIC FOUNDATIONS

SKILL ELEMENTS AND KPIS

Below are drills to help players develop football movement skills. These skills, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and drills will help lay the foundation for these physical movements.

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS

General physical movements that are foundational to developing athleticism while serving as a base to support sport specific skills.

RUNNING

KPI(s):

Arms, Control, Tempo, Feet, Acceleration

- Skip and march with contralateral arm movement and linear arm movement
- Skip and march with proper hip drive
- Skip and march with thigh parallel to the ground
- Stop and go with body control
- Skip and march while changing tempos
- Run in various orientations and pathways
- Proper foot strike
- Appropriate body lean
- Appropriate hip/arm/body mechanics associated with acceleration

Drills to Support

- March
- Skip
- Bound
- Zig-zag Pathway
- Forward/Backward Runs
- Stop-and-Go Flow
- Multi-Directional Get Up and Go
- Lateral Crossover Balance

SHUFFLING

Sliding laterally with the lead shoulder pointing in the direction of the movement; feet sliding along the ground in direction of movement without touching or crossing each other

KPI(s):

Control, Tempo, Feet, Stance

- Gallop and shuffle without feet touching
- Shuffle laterally to right and left
- Stop and go with body control
- Perform all actions with varying tempos
- Perform actions on balls of feet
- Keeps a low center of mass and moving fluidly

Drills to Support

- Gallop
- Lateral Shuffle
- Racetrack

JUMPING AND HOPPING

Jumping: Pushing off the ground with both feet, using the leg muscles to achieve takeoff, and landing balanced on two feet with knees slightly bent to absorb the impact

Hopping: Pushing off the ground with one foot, using the leg muscles to achieve takeoff, and landing balanced on one foot with a slight bend in the hopping leg to absorb the impact and opposite leg bent at the knee, not touching the ground

KPI(s):

Coordinated Movement, Balance, Tempo, Force, Deceleration

- Jump with both feet leaving the ground at the same time
- Land with both feet touching the ground at the same time
- Coordinated arm swing, raising and lowering the center of mass
- Leave ground and land on one foot while maintaining balance and body control
- Perform all actions at varying tempos
- Jump and hop in various directions
- Jump and hop with varying force
- Perform actions while using proper landing mechanics (knees bent, hips lowered, spinal integrity, chest up)

Drills to Support

- 2-Leg Jump
- 1-Leg Hop
- Dot Jump/Hop
- 2-Leg Lateral Jumps
- 1-Leg Lateral Hops
- Forward/Backward Hops
- Jump Rope
- 180 Jumps

FALLING AND ROLLING

Falling: Moving fluidly from an upright position to a position on the ground without bracing with the limbs

Rolling: Using twisting or circular movement of the whole body to travel in a given direction while on the ground in a non-upright position

KPI(s):

Head, Arms, Knees, Landing, Transitions

- Roll in straight line
- Transition from a standing position to a roll
- Protect the head while falling to the ground
- Roll in different orientations
- Transition into a roll from an upright movement skill and return to movement skill

Drills to Support

- Forward Rolls
- Backward Rolls
- Shoulder Rolls
- Backward Shoulder Rolls
- Log Roll Bonanza
- Seat Rolls to Bear Crawl
- Lateral Shuffle and Roll
- Push Up and Roll

SENSORY AWARENESS

The ability to receive and differentiate various types of sensory stimuli in the environment and respond appropriately.

KPI(s):

Vocabulary, Space, Vision, Balance, Direction

- Movement skill vocabulary
- Move in space
- Directional awareness
- Identify different rhythms and tempos
- Visually track an object
- Maintain balance in different body orientations
- Execute tasks that combine multiple sensory skills

Drills to Support

- Heel/Toe Walk
- 4-Way Balance
- 1-Leg Balance
- 1-Leg Balance Reach
- My Gears

ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Foundational movement skills and skill descriptors that are inherent to all levels and game types within football.

AGILITY

- Ability of an athlete to move quickly and easily
- Ability of an athlete to move and change direction and position the body quickly and effectively while under control

Drills to Support

- Building Agility 1
- Building Agility 2
- Building Agility 3
- Building Agility 4
- Follow the Snake
- Agility Ladder Run
- Agility Ladder Lateral
- Quick Feet Reaction
- Partner Mirror Drill

STRENGTH AND POWER

Strength: The amount of weight that can be moved and not the speed in which it is moved

Power: Moving an object between two points as quickly as possible with force

Drills to Support

- Partner Mirror Hands
- Squat Under
- Squat Walkout
- No Hands, Get Up
- 2-Leg, 3-Cone Reach
- 1-Leg Balance Reach
- Crab Crawl
- Bear Crawl
- Push Up and Roll

STAMINA

- Ability of an athlete to sustain prolonged physical or mental effort



Drills to Support

- Sharks and Minnows
- Clean and Dirty
- Flying 20 or 30

SPEED

- The rate at which an athlete moves or operates
- The ability of an athlete to move quickly across the ground or move limbs rapidly to grab or throw



Drills to Support

- Partner Sit-to-Stand Race
- Sprints
- Gear Runs
- W-Drill
- Backpedal

“ The Football Development Model works for us because it’s the baseline and we build off of it. The foundation has been set. And by having the foundation we now have the structure of our game and our whole program. By having a strong foundation, you can build upon that and show everybody this is what’s going to happen, this is where it goes and this is how we continue to move forward.”

Lucas Dake

Flag Football Coach, Iowa Development Football League