



YMCA of Greater Charlotte Youth Flag Football Practice Playbook

U-8 Divisions and Up



Welcome to the YMCA of Greater Charlotte,

The YMCA of Greater Charlotte is very excited that you have chosen to be a coach. No single job is more important to the mission and vision of the YMCA than a youth sports coach. YMCA values: of caring, respect, responsibility, honesty, and faith are the foundation to connecting, giving back, nurturing the potential of every child and supporting our neighbors. This foundational impact requires a core of committed youth volunteer coaches who have a desire to see their communities encouraged and players' lives transformed.

The YMCA has put together this resource guide to help you as a coach and to make your job as easy and achievable as possible.

As a coach you have the opportunity to teach, mentor, motivate, encourage, and guide your players as they develop as players and young people with character. Positive role models can help players grow mentally, physically, and emotionally as they promote confidence and positive self-image for athletes. Thank you for your commitment!

The YMCA Sports Philosophy

Everyone Plays.

We do not use tryouts to select the best player, nor do we cut kids from YMCA Youth Sports. Everyone who registers to play is assigned to a team. Remember, we are more interested in developing children's character.



As a coach, you must ensure that all players receive equal playing time and every player plays at least half of every game.

Fair Play.

Fair play is about more than playing by the rules. It's about you, your players and players' parents showing respect for all who are involved in YMCA Youth Sports. It's about you being a role model of good sportsmanship and guiding your players and families to do the same.



As a coach, set the example of good sportsmanship and reward players and parents for showing respect to all involved in YMCA Youth Sports.

Positive Competition.

We believe competition is a positive process when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. The right perspective means adults make decisions that put the best interests of the children above winning the contest. Learning to compete is important for children and learning to cooperate in a competitive world is an essential lesson in life. Learning to win is just as important as learning to lose.



As a coach, help your players set goals that are not about winning or losing. This way, no matter what the score of the game, your players learn that no matter what the score is, there is value in playing the game.

Family Involvement.

We encourage parents to be involved appropriately along with their child's participation in sports. In addition to parents being helpful as volunteer coaches, officials and timekeepers, we encourage them to be present at practices and games to support their player.



As a coach, give parents responsibilities that will benefit the team –like bringing healthy snacks and water.

Sports for All.

YMCA Youth Sports is an inclusive program, meaning that children who differ in various characteristics, including physical ability, race, gender, religion or ability are included in participation.



As a coach, support and appreciate the diversity of children in your community and encourage your players and parents to do the same



As a coach, emphasize the importance of having fun, reminding parents and players that the benefits of physical activity in childhood are long-lasting.

Athlete Developmental Stages

As you coach, it is important to know your audience and where they are in terms of their development:

6-7 years olds:

- The focus is on individual development of coordination and skill development
- Our job as coaches is to teach them to LOVE the sport and the game!

8-9 years olds:

- Are becoming more coordinated and emotionally mature
- Are able to work on team concepts and plays!
- Are becoming increasingly social, are creative, and will ask many questions

10-12 years old:

- Are able to think, run, and the control ball at the same time while determining next move!
- Are very eager to learn and improve skills!
- Self-esteem and self-confidence may hinge on team approval and performance

We trust that this material will not only be helpful to you as you coach but also in the character development of your players. In whatever you do, we encourage you and your players to enjoy your time together and to have fun...that is what they will remember!

The Basics of Every Practice

Opening Circle

Take a few minutes to welcome your players to practice. Be sure to do the following:

- Thought for the day/ Goal for today's practice – what skills will we be working on
- Overview of the flow of today's practice – roadmap of the next hour

Warm-up and Stretch

Spend at least 5 minutes exercising to raise your players' heart rates and warm their muscles. Warm-up can be anything from a quick game of tag to running a few laps to conditioning exercises. Never skip the warm-up and stretch section of practice!

Water Breaks

Whether it is hot or cold where you are practicing, be sure to allow your players to get water at any point during practice. Staying hydrated helps your players focus on the skills they're learning.

Individual Skill Drills

This is a time for players to work on a skill and develop it as an individual player. You will find individual skill drills to incorporate into your practices in the next section. Allow your players adequate time in learning any new skill before asking them to apply it as a team.

Team Skill Games

This is the time for your team to come together and develop their skills as a functioning group of players. The team skill drills should build on the individual skill drills, providing natural progression from individually mastering a new skill to applying it as a team. You will find team skill drills to incorporate into your practices in the next section.

Scrimmage

There is no better way to prepare for a game and to apply the skills learned throughout practice than to put them to action in a game-type situation. Always include a scrimmage in every practice – it gives your players a chance to develop their teamwork and will enhance their comfort in game situations.

Closing Huddle

Take just a few minutes at the end of practice to review the skills you worked on and evaluate the goals set at the beginning of practice. Encourage your players to continue to practice throughout the week with their friends and parents. Review all the necessary information for the upcoming game, including:

- Location/ What time to arrive/ Who is bringing the snack

FIRST PRACTICE WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

COACHING POINTS:

First practice is always a little tough.

- Remember that the players don't know each other so try to make them at ease and have fun
- Learn everyone's names as quickly as possible
- **Encourage players to try their best and make new friends!**

Encouragement is saying or doing things that build others up.

RULES OF FLAG FOOTBALL: REVIEW

- Have players line up and hold a general session to introduce yourself, learn player's names, and provide a general overview of the Flag Football rules.
- Tell the players about the layout of the field and provide direction for the object and goals of the team. Explain when you are facing the end zone you are attacking, the end zone behind you, you are defending
- Next, tell the players that the out-of-bounds on the sides and what happens when you go out of bounds.
- Take all the players around to the different areas of the field and describe what each boundary means to the game of play.
- Take some time to describe the responsibility and role of all of the different positions on a flag football team. This is important to success!
- While describing different positions on a team, spend some time answering questions from the players and learning what athletes may enjoy a particular role.
- Describe the role of a referee during a game and how referees, other coaches, and other players should always be respected in the game of competition.
- Spend time sharing and practicing the appropriate way to wear a flag for flag football and what it means to grab a flag and mark someone down.
- Lastly describe and demonstrate how to correctly carry and protect a football during a run or play.

Individual Skill Drills

COACHING POINTS:

Running is running with the ball.

- Keep ball tucked
- Keep your head up
- Encourage kids when they excel and when they struggle!

Determination is the inner drive we use to reach our goals.

APPLICATION: APPLYING Running WITH DETERMINATION" TO LIFE

What to look for:

Look for players in your drill who are having trouble getting the concepts. You can also observe how kids handle losing in the scrimmage; notice the way they respond to this adversity. Are they showing determination?

What to say:

"Everyone messes up. Everyone falls short. The determined person is different because they get back up and try again! Remember this as you dribble today. Be determined to be the best you can be!"

What to take away:

Help your team understand that challenging situations are everywhere. At home, at school and on the field there are opportunities to show determination all around you. Ex. "Determination helps you reach your goals. Use this week to be determined on and off the field!"

Be positive when you instruct, for example:
"Good work, I like your effort!";

"Be determined to teach being determined!"

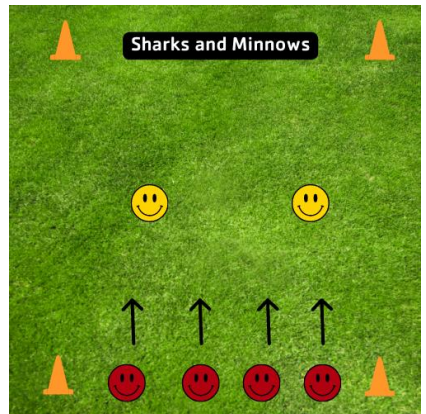
WARM UPS

Tails

- Field large enough for the players to run around
- Players try to grab each other's flags
- Once flag is pulled, the puller sets the flag on the ground and the flagless player kneels or sits on the ground
- Players who are sitting can't move around but can still grab flags
- Play continues until only one player is standing or coach decides to start over

Sharks and Minnows

- Choose two players to be sharks and the rest will be minnows
- All the minnows start on one side of the field and the sharks start in the middle. On the coach's signal, the minnows attempt to run past the sharks and to the other side of the field while sharks try and steal their flags.
- When a minnow's flag has been grabbed,
- Last minnow with flags wins



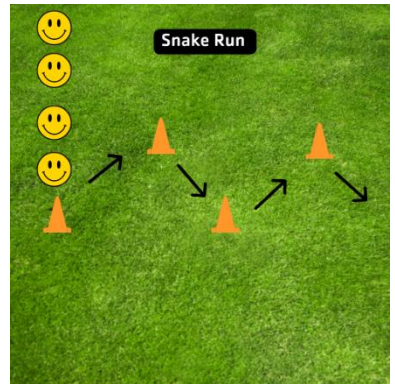
Running

Introduce Running – Key Points

- Tuck the ball in
- Keep your hips low
- Stay on your toes

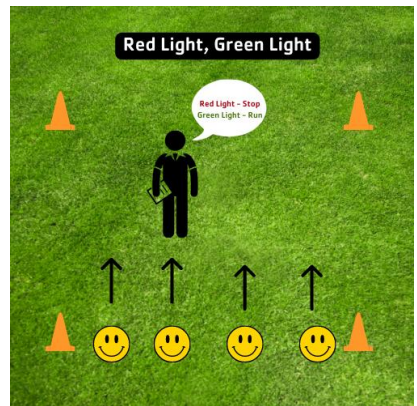
Snake Run

- Footballs and Cones
- Set up cones that zig-zag
- Player receives a hand-off from a coach and then runs to each cone.
- Runner proceeds to run to the next cones until done
- Everyone rotates closer to the first cone



Red Light, Green Light

- Footballs and Cones
- Each player lines up on one end of the field while the coach stands on the opposite end
- Players run from one end of the field to the other
- When coach calls green light, players run. When coach calls red light, players must freeze.
- First player across coach's line wins



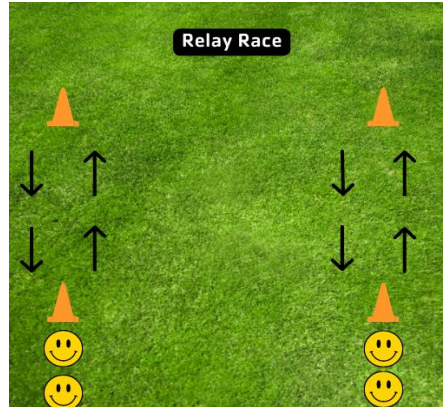
In A Mirror

- Have kids line up in rows
- As the coach, have the players copy you as you do different skills
- Example, running on toes, side to side, star jumps



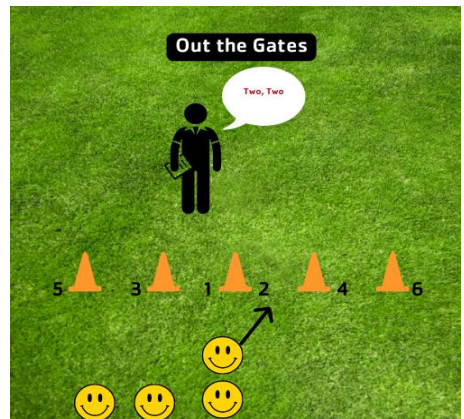
Relay Race

- Cones and football
- Set up rows with a start cone and another cone 10 yards away
- On the coach's signal, first person in each line runs to the cone and back, handing the ball off to the next person as they go.
- First team to have everyone finish wins



Out the Gates

- Set up running lanes by setting cones in a grid
- Tell the kids the name of gaps you created
- Drill is designed for them to switch how they are running quickly and the mental aspect of remembering a play call.



SCRIMMAGE

- Divide the teams up evenly and have them play against each other while you referee/coach
- Remember, the emphasis of this practice is to be determined and to never give up even if a bad play does not go well



PASSING WITH TEAMWORK

COACHING POINTS:

Passing Key Points

- Hold the ball toward the back
- Step towards your target
- Follow through when you throw

Teamwork is the ability to work together towards a

APPLICATION: APPLYING “PASSING WITH TEAMWORK” TO LIFE

What to look for:

Try to find a player who chooses to use teamwork instead of doing it on their own.

What to say:

“It can be tempting to do everything by yourself in football. Sometimes you may think you can score 1, 2, or even 3 touchdowns just by running and not thinking of teammates. However, if you make a habit of working with your teammates, everyone is a part of helping the ball move faster and greater things are accomplished. The best football teams in the world are the ones that have the best teamwork!”

What to take away:

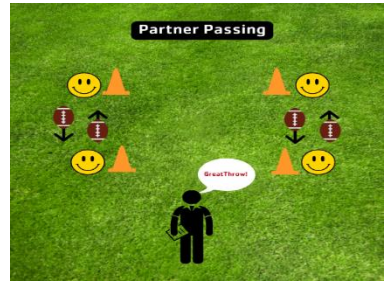
Teamwork is coming alongside teammates to accomplish something greater than you could do as individuals. Using teamwork divides the task and multiplies your success. Ex. “We cannot do everything ourselves. We need each other. Even at home, we can contribute our gifts and talents to our families to do chores or help with our brothers and sisters. When we all are included, everyone benefits!”

TEAMWORK DIVIDES THE TASK AND MULTIPLIES THE SUCCESS.

Passing

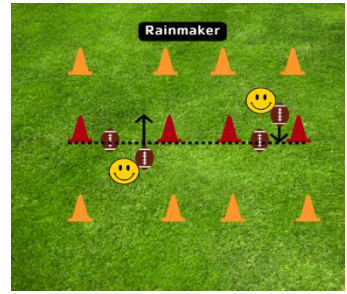
Partner Passing

- Have kids pair up and stand 5 yards apart
- Throw the ball back and forth
- Try to make it so their partner doesn't move
- Encourage them to keep track of how many passes they make



Rainmaker

- Make a line out of cones for the middle
- Set up two squares on each side as goals
- Have two players go at a time. They will run to the pile on their side and start aiming for the goals across the line



Clean Up the Yard

- Make a line down the middle and a throwing line on either side
- Approximately five yards from the middle.
- Divide the group into two or have teams compete against each other
- Point of the game is to end up with more footballs on the opposite side.
- When the whistle blows, players can pick up balls and drop back to their throwing line. Idea is to keep picking up balls, dropping back and getting rid of the balls quickly.

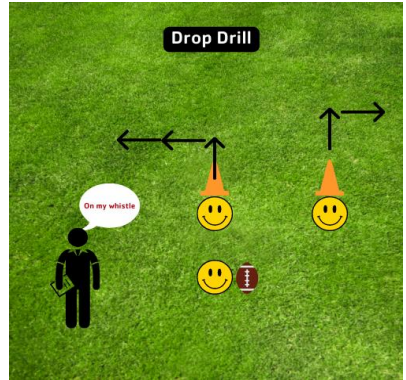
Throwing For Distance

- Set up a line of cones. Have each player stand on the line with a football
- On the coach's command, each player will throw the ball as far as they can
- As they throw, coach can stand on the farthest throw
-



Drop Drill

- Split into groups of three players each and assign each player a position: Center, qb and receiver.
- Give them each a football
- On the coach's signal, the center hikes the ball to the QB. QB will drop back 3 steps and throws to the receiver.
- Players rotate positions after each rep



Catching WITH CONFIDENCE

COACHING POINTS:

Catching

- Make a diamond for high throws
- Make rakes for low throws
- Squeeze, then tuck

Confidence is believing you can do something.

APPLICATION: APPLYING Catching WITH CONFIDENCE" TO LIFE

What to look for:

Look for a player who is not afraid to try something new.

What to say:

"When we believe we can do something and give our best effort, we are able to accomplish great things. Even when we fail, we can learn and try again. Don't give up or be afraid to try something new. Be confident that your best is good enough. You never know what you are capable of!"

What to take away:

Confidence comes from the successes you experience from doing your best.

Ex. "When you are confident, you believe you can do something. When you have this positive attitude, great things can happen. Don't doubt your natural abilities. Always try your best and don't be afraid to try something new."

"Confidence comes not from always being right,
but not fearing to be wrong."

Catching

Intro Catching

- Have kids pair up and stand 5 yards apart
- Throw the ball back and forth
- Try to make it so their partner doesn't have to move
- Encourage them to keep track of how many passes they make



Rapid Catch

- Create a semi-circle around a single player about five yards away
- On the coach's signal, have the first player throw it to the player in the middle. When they catch the ball, they should secure it, drop it and get ready for the next throw
- Throwers wait for the coach to tell them to throw

Yards after Catch

- Have players stand five yards apart while they pass the ball back and forth
- When the signal is given, player has to catch the ball and take off running
- Player who does not have the ball has to chase down and pull flags of the player who caught it

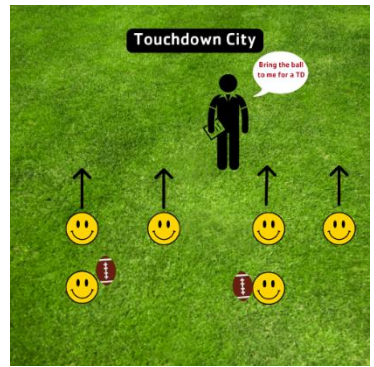


Ladder Relay

- Set up 12 cones in a zig zag style 5 yards apart
- The Player on the right starts with the ball. On the coach's signal the player on the left side runs to the first cone and catches a pass from the player on the right
- After they throw the ball, the player on the right they runs towards the next cone on their side and asks for the pass back

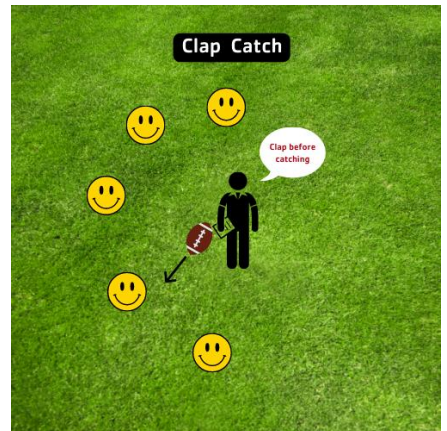
Touchdown City

- Divide players into teams of three. Set up routes you want them to run on either side of the QB
- One player will be the QB and the other two will be the WR's. One WR goes at a time.
- Team that scores five touchdowns first wins
- To score a TD, the player must run and hand their football to a coach



Clap Catch

- The coach stands in the middle with the players in a semi-circle around him
- Coach starts making a pass to random players. The player must clap their hands before catching the ball
- If there is no clap or if the player drops the pass, the player sits down.
- If the coach fakes a pass and the player claps, they must also sit down



Passing Relay

- Make two lines of cones 10 – 20 yards apart
- Split players into multiple teams
- Put half of each team behind the QB line and the other half behind the WR line. Give one ball to each QB group
- On the coach's signal, the first QB's throw to their receivers. If the receiver catches the ball behind the WR line, they throw it back to the QB line.
- If the WR does not catch the ball, his QB needs to keep passing to the player until a catch is made.



Defense

WITH SELF-DISCIPLINE

COACHING POINTS:

Defense

- Don't cross your legs
- Watch the hips of your opponent
- Stay on your toes

Self-Discipline is the ability to practice and train to

Sidewinder

- Place cones five yards apart and have a player stand between the cones
- Have the players move laterally between the cones and the coach's signal
- Players will quickly move back and forth to tag either cone

Do the Opposite

- Have kids form a semi-circle around a coach
- Have the coach throw the ball to the kids. As the ball is in the air, have the coach call out "Catch or Bat".
- If they do the wrong thing, they are out
- 3rd progression, 1 ball for group, B turns and passes ball to opposite player



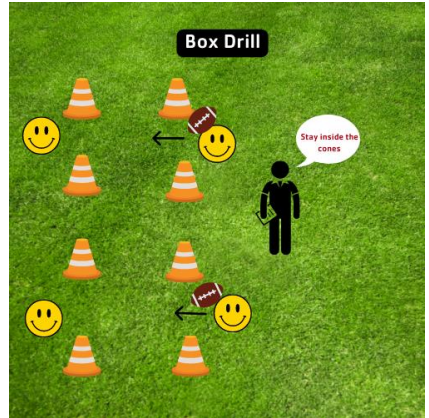
Bat It Down

- Have kids form a semi-circle around a coach
- Have the coach throw the ball above the players heads or to the side of them.
- Have them work on batting the ball down instead of catching the ball



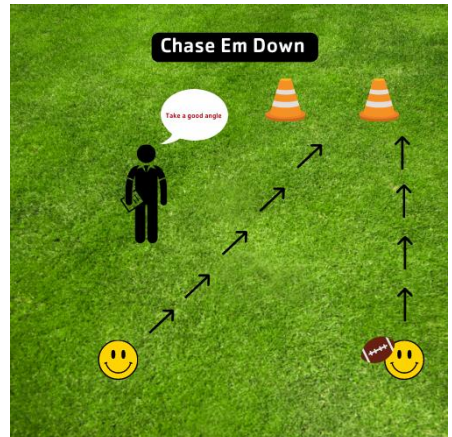
Box Drill

- Set up a few stations of four sets of cones in a square with each cone five yards apart.
- Have players partner up
- One player starts with the football on offense while their partner is on defense
- The defender has 15 seconds to pull the offensive player's flag. Offensive player must stay in bounds
- Have the players switch roles when flag is pulled



Chase Em Down

- Create a sideline 15-20 yards long
- Place two cones at the end for a goal line
- On the coach's signal, the offensive player runs with the ball while the defender attempts to pull his flag shortly before the runner reaches the goal line.
- Offense should run straight and not attempt to avoid the defender.
- The point is to teach the defender to take good angles and to pull the flag on the run



APPLICATION: APPLYING "RECEIVING WITH SELF-DISCIPLINE" TO LIFE

What to look for:

Try to find the player on your team who chooses to do the right thing, instead of the easy thing.

What to say:

"Let's try to do things in the drills and games today with good technique. Even if it is easier to use bad technique let's be self-disciplined and do the right things, the right way!"

What to take away:

Self-discipline is choosing to do the right thing instead of taking the easy way out. The easy thing may take less effort in the short term but it usually results in having to do more work in the long term. Ex. "Should you choose to study or cheat? Clean your room or just shove everything under your bed? These are examples of having to choose between doing things the right way, or the easy way."

"Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment."

BRIDGE THE GAP



SESSION

WITH CHARACTER TRAIT

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

_____min

_____min

_____min

_____min

COACHING POINTS:

Session: _____

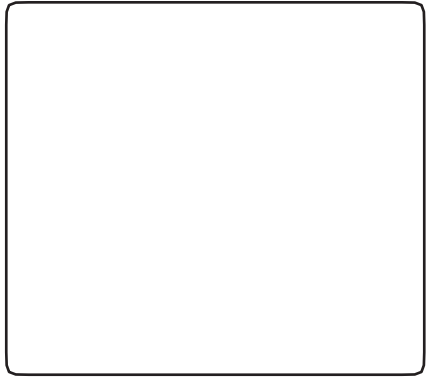
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Character Trait: _____

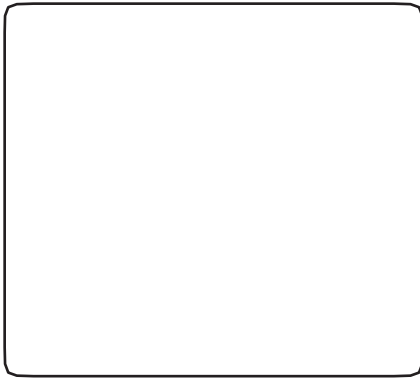
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WARM UP

MAIN SKILL



IF TIME...



APPLICATION:

Situations in games to use this skill:

Situations in life to use this skill:
