

FOOTBALL

INSTRUCTIONS

This Learning Packet has two parts: (1) text to read and (2) questions to answer. The text describes a particular sport or physical activity, and relates its history, rules, playing techniques, scoring, notes and news.

The Response Forms (questions and puzzles) check your understanding and appreciation of the sport or physical activity.

INTRODUCTION

Football is a physically challenging, aggressive sport played by two teams of opposing players. Each of the two teams tries to get the ball across the opposing team's goal by running, kicking and passing the ball.

American-style football is often known as "the gridiron sport" because of the design of the field. The sport is widely popular in the United States and is gaining fan support in Canada.

Although American-style tackle football, as it is called, has spread to a few other countries, it has not achieved the international reputation of such sports as baseball and basketball.

American-style football is a combination of two older sports, soccer and rugby. Soccer (still called football in England) and rugby, which developed from soccer, are both more popular in Europe and other countries than in the United States.

Unlike soccer, a game in which players are forbidden to use their hands but may use other body parts, football allows perhaps the roughest physical contact of any team sport.

However, two variations on tackle football, called "touch football" and "flag football" respectively, do not involve tackling the opponent and are less physically challenging to play.

HISTORY OF FOOTBALL

Football first became popular in the United States in the 1820s, when it was widely played in colleges and universities. Many colleges, including Yale, Harvard and Cornell, played an early version of football which incorporated many features of rugby. Football at this time had no uniform rules and regulations, and games often

ended up with heaps of injured players on the field! To stop this physically violent aspect of football, Walter

Camp (now remembered as “the father of American football”) in 1880 made many changes in the game. Most of these changes regulated the physical violence of the sport and many have lasted into modern times.

Camp refined the scrimmage (a term borrowed from rugby), a play whereby the center puts the ball into play by sending it to the quarterback. In addition, Camp introduced the role of the quarterback, now considered the most exciting position on the team. Camp also altered the number of players on a team from the traditional 15 of rugby to the 11 now used in modern football.

Camp was also the person who finalized the alignment of the 11 players into 7 forwards, a quarterback, two halfbacks and a fullback.

Between 1882 and 1888, Camp made three more significant changes in the game. First, a system of downs and yardage to be gained was finalized. According to the new rules, a team has to surrender the ball if it fails to gain five yards (later increased to 10 yards) in three downs (later raised to four). This was the rule that made it necessary to mark the field with horizontal lines five yards apart, thus giving the field its traditional “gridiron” appearance.

Another rule Camp introduced was regulations for scoring— specifically, giving points to different scoring methods.

For example, tackling a ball carrier behind his own goal line was worth one point. Many of Camp’s changes in this area still apply today.

Finally, Camp changed the tackling rule to its present status. In early football, tackling was permitted only from the waist up. Camp changed the rule to permit tackling as low as the knee area. Linemen, however, were required to keep their arms at their sides, and were not allowed to block with their arms as they previously had done.

Football has grown steadily in popularity in the United States and Canada, largely because of television. Thanks to television coverage of this sport, football has grown into a major industry in North America. Television, in fact, dictates much about how the game is now played. For example, halftime, time outs and even the overall length of the game have been extended to allow for TV commercials. As a result, games on television can last up to three hours.

Television has also made superstars out of many players, giving them a chance for new careers in the media. Many football players have “retired” from the game, only to reappear on television as actors and sports commentators.

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

The football field is traditionally 100 yards long from one goal line to the other and 160 feet wide. The “end zone” extends ten yards past each goal line. In professional football, the goalposts are ten yards behind the goal lines. The width between the posts is 18 feet six inches.

A coin toss determines which team has the choice of receiving the ball or starting the game with a kick-off. A kick-off occurs when the football is kicked while it is placed on a tee and sent to the opposing team. The kick-off traditionally occurs on the kicking team’s 35-yard line. The receiving team is situated 10 yards from the kickoff line.

Once the ball has been kicked off, the team with the ball tries to advance down the field in order to score points.

When a player carries the ball into the end zone or catches a forward pass in the end zone, he/she scores six points for a touchdown.

Meanwhile, the defensive team tries to get into a scoring position either by intercepting a pass or by picking up a fumbled ball. The team that scores a touchdown can get an extra point by kicking the ball over the crossbar of the goalposts in a move known as a “conversion.”

By running instead of kicking the conversion, two additional points can be earned. In order to make a first down, the offensive team has four downs, or plays, in which to advance the ball at least ten yards. Each time that a player makes a first down, that team gets another series of four downs in which it can gain at least ten more yards.

If a team has failed to gain 10 yards by the fourth down, it has two options to choose from. The team may opt to punt the ball to the other team, or it may attempt a field goal. A “punt” entails dropping the ball and kicking it before it touches the ground.

A football game lasts for sixty minutes broken into four 15-minute periods, or “quarters.” After the second quarter, there is usually a 20-minute break.

The clock may be stopped for any of the following four reasons:

- an incomplete pass
- a runner goes out of bounds
- a penalty
- after a score is made

Teams are typically penalized five, ten or fifteen yards, depending on the type of foul committed. For example, a five-yard penalty would be given for delaying the game or for crossing the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed. Ten-yard penalties are typically given for illegally holding a player on the opposing team. Fifteen-yard penalties are given for the most serious offenses. They include blocking from behind, butting another player with a helmet and running into/tackling the passer once the ball has been thrown.

EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Because of the rough nature of football, modern players wear a good deal of padding and protection, including helmets, face masks and pads that cover the hips, shoulders, knees and forearms. Flak jackets also are used to cover the ribs and mouthpieces protect the mouth and face. Now that artificial turf is so widely used on playing fields, special cleated shoes are also worn.

Players wear a uniform characterized by tight pants ending just below the knee. Numbers are sewn on the fronts and backs of the jerseys for identification purposes.

Quarterbacks and kickers are 1-19, running backs and defensive backs, 20-49, centers and linebackers, 50-59 and linemen, 60-79. Wide receivers and tight ends are numbers 80-89 and defensive linemen/linebackers use numbers 90-99.

STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET

FOOTBALL

NAME _____

DATE _____

WHAT TO DO

The following questions will help you to have a greater appreciation and understanding of football. Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, and write in complete sentences.

1. What are some of the benefits to be derived from playing football?
2. Why is American-style football often called the “gridiron sport?”
3. What is the composition of a typical football field and where is the “end zone?”
4. What is a kick-off in football?

5. How is a first down made and what advantage does it give the team that makes it?
6. What options does a team have if it has not gained 10 yards by the fourth down?
7. For what four reasons may the clock be stopped?
8. Fifteen-yard penalties are given for what kinds of offenses?
9. What kinds of protective gear and clothing does a football player need to wear?
10. Name at least one way in which television coverage has affected the game of football.

Word Search

NAME: _____ Date: _____

Use the clues below to discover words in the above puzzle. Circle the words.

1. The offensive leader on the field
2. Number of yards a team is penalized for a delay of game
3. Number of minutes played in football game
4. There are usually two players on the field in this position
5. American football is a combination of soccer and this sport
6. After this quarter there is a halftime break in the game
7. The number of yards needed for a first down
8. Length in yards of a football field
9. 160 feet is the _____ of the football field
10. There is usually only one of these on the field for the offensive team
11. When the center sends the ball to the quarterback
12. Kicking the ball over the crossbar for an extra point
13. When a defensive player catches a pass
14. What a team often does if it does not make a first down on the third attempt
15. The number of forwards in football
16. A type of football game that does not involve tackling
17. He is the father of American football
18. This player has a jersey number lower than 19
19. Football is called the _____ sport because of the field design
20. The number of attempts a team has to make a first down

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