



SENIOR TACKLE™
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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THANK YOU ESPN

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

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INTRODUCTION

USA Football's Senior Tackle™ Football is a full-field game-type designed to be the final step in a league's youth football pathway before athletes enter high school sports.

Within this development stage, athletes participate in full-field tackle football with 6 to 11 players per side. USA Football believes that a high-quality transition from other game types, such as the small-sided game of Rookie Tackle®, to full-field tackle is essential to player development and a positive experience driven by high quality coaching.

The goal of this game type in the Football Development Model is to introduce players to more advanced fundamentals from what they learned in Non-Contact, Limited Contact and/or Rookie Tackle® game types. The game becomes a bit more competitive with new elements and recommended rules for experienced players.

WHAT IS THE FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL?

The Football Development Model (FDM) is USA Football's new initiative designed to help coaches teach athletes based on their age, the skills they are learning and game type.

From flag to traditional tackle, USA Football has outlined the progression of game types to give leagues and players options to share and play the game. These game types, in addition to the skill and age progressions, help reduce contact and make the game safer.

Learn more at usafootball.com/fdm

IMPLEMENTATION AND GAME PHILOSOPHY

Like all other forms of youth football, USA Football envisions leagues and clubs adopting Senior Tackle football following experiences in Non-Contact, Limited Contact and/or Rookie Tackle games to complete the youth football pathway.

USA Football provides rule books, participation best practices and rule modifications, but we are aware the game will be governed and implemented at the local level.

As such, the age or grade to begin each of the different games is determined by the local league commissioners and may overlap or differ based on community circumstances (e.g., enrollment numbers, access to facilities, number of coaches, etc.).

The goals of Senior Tackle football are:

1. Maximizing player enjoyment and skill development.
2. Providing all players meaningful playing time and the opportunity for success.
3. Introducing players to new positions and strategies that come with traditional field sizes and 6 to 11-players aside in the Senior Tackle version of football.
4. Introducing the three-point stance to lineman as a natural progression from the two-point stance they learned in Rookie Tackle.
5. Introducing special teams positions, fundamentals and strategies.
6. Preparing athletes for the demands of scholastic sports by providing increased challenges to skill development and tactical aspects of the game in an age-appropriate manner.
7. Encouraging a fast-paced game with more plays, greater activity and the promotion of fundamental skill development.

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8. Limiting roster sizes to provide as much focused, individualized coaching attention as possible during practices and games. Roster limit is up to 22 players per team.

Senior Tackle rules and implementation are based on rules from [National Federation of State High School Associations \(NFHS\)](#) and [NCAA](#).

SENIOR TACKLE RULES

RULES

Senior Limited Contact can be played with anywhere from 6 to 11 players per side using the [NFHS rule book](#) as a base and employs the following adjustments:

General Adjustments:

The opportunity to adjust the number of timeouts or to stop the clock for point after attempt (PAT) tries before resetting the ball back at the 30-yard line is a league-specific decision.

No contact can be initiated with the helmet at any point on the field.

Offensive Adjustments:

1. Played by standard NFHS rules with the following exception:
 - a. No blocking below the waist by any player anywhere on the field.

Defensive Adjustments

1. Played by standard NFHS rules with the following exceptions:
 - a. Teams can send no more than one blitzer per play, and that blitz cannot come through the center-guard A gap. A blitzer is defined as any defensive player not on the line of scrimmage at the snap or any defensive player not in a three- or four-point stance and not on the end of the formation.

Teams can drop defensive linemen into coverage on a zone blitz, but that does not increase the number of blitzers available on that play.

Special Teams Adjustments:

1. Following a touchdown, teams can go for a 1-point kick from the 3-yard line or a 2-point try from the 5-yard line.

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2. Point after touchdown (PATs) are snapped from the 3-yard line with the holder and kicker placed at the kicking team's discretion.
 3. There is no return of a miss PAT or field goal regardless of whether it crosses the line of scrimmage or not. A missed field goal that reaches the end zone is spotted at the 30-yard line for the new possession. A ball that does not reach the end zone is spotted at the 30-yard line or the previous line of scrimmage, whichever benefits the new team in possession.
 4. Once the ready for play whistle has been blown, a kicking team has the regular 25-second play clock to either punt or place kick.

TIMING AND OVERTIME

1. Each game is made up of four quarters:
 - a. 12 minutes with a running clock or
 - b. 8 minutes with a standard clock
2. Leagues can decide the following based on their needs:
 - a. Number of time outs per game or half.
 - b. Whether to stop the clock on PAT attempts and/or turnovers.
3. Overtime is played only in playoff games (if the league hosts playoffs) and runs in accordance with NFHS rules.

SCORING

1. All touchdowns are worth 6 points.
2. PATs are the coach's choice
 - a. A one-point kick from the 3-yard line or a two-point try from the 5-yard line.
3. Field goals are worth 3 points.
4. A defensive safety results in 2 points.

PARTICIPATION BEST PRACTICES

USA Football recommends that rosters be limited to a maximum of 22 players to ensure the opportunity for all athletes to be assigned a primary position and can rotate onto the field at every change of possession. This will ensure all players have ample opportunity to participate.

Each player shall play the entire game either on offense or defense. Some players may be required to go both ways depending on roster size. The purpose is to allow every participant to play and learn as a member of the team in the introduction to full-field 11-on-11 football. Each player should learn two positions on both offense and defense - a primary and a secondary position - to continue to promote general skill development and athleticism. Players may learn grouped positions such as center and guard or cornerback and safety. The Rookie Tackle rule of playing both line and backfield play does not apply at this level.

COACHES

The number of coaches per team is determined by the league. However, USA Football recommends leagues work in earnest to balance the number of coaches per team at a 1:6 (recommended) to 1:10 (maximum) ratio, approximately two or three per team. While the desire for coaches to work with their own children may be a driving influence, leagues should look for creative ways to create numerical balance. This is done for the sake of the players. An equal opportunity to be coached and learn should be afforded to all players involved in the league.

All football coaches should be certified before they reach the practice field. Coaches must earn their certification each year. Get started at usafootball.com/certification.

RECOMMENDED SEASON LENGTH AND GAMES PER SEASON

Senior Tackle football is designed to be a fall-only season with a maximum of 10 games per season. A game is defined as a preseason scrimmage, regular season game or playoff competition. Thus, if a league incorporates a playoff into the season, the number of preseason scrimmages plus regular season and playoff games are limited to 10 total. Leagues that host playoffs should consider hosting consolation rounds so that all members of all teams receive the same number of games and opportunity for development. There should be a minimum of five days between games.

WEEKLY PRACTICES AND CONTACT LIMITS

Senior Tackle football participants should be exposed to no more than four practices per week during the preseason. There are no two-a-days. After an acclimatization period is conducted, full contact (defined as Thud and Live by [USA Football's Levels of Contact](#)) is limited to no more than 30 minutes per day, no more than 120 minutes per week.

During the regular season, practice is reduced to maximum of three per week to accommodate the game with each practice having a full contact limit to no more than 30 minutes per day, no more than 90 minutes per week.

** 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.**