

LESSON FOCUS

GRADES 5-8

Football Skills — Forward Passing, Catching, Centering, Punting



SHAPE Standards:

3, 4

DPE Outcomes:

- I can discuss the activities I engage in outside of school.
- I can compliment others during physical education.

Equipment:

- 10-15 foam rubber junior size footballs, 4 soccer balls, or 8" foam rubber balls
- 12 cones for boundaries

Instructions

Skills

Practice the following skills:

1. Forward Passing

The ball should be gripped lightly behind the middle with the fingers on the lace. The thumbs and fingers should be relaxed. In throwing, the opposing foot should point in the direction of the pass, with the body turned sideways. In preparation for the pass, the ball is raised up and held over the shoulders. The ball is delivered directly forward with an overhand movement of the arm and with the index finger pointing toward the line of flight.

2. Catching

When making a catch, the receiver should keep both eyes on the ball and catch it in the hands with a slight give. As soon as the ball is caught, it should be tucked into the carrying position. The little fingers are together for most catches.

3. Centering

Centering involves transferring the ball, on a signal, to the quarterback. In elementary school, the shotgun formation is most often used. This requires snapping the ball a few yards backward to the quarterback. A direct snap involves placing the hands under the buttocks of the center. The ball is then lifted, rotated a quarter turn, and snapped into the hands of the quarterback.

The centering player takes a position with the feet well spread and toes pointed straight ahead. Knees are bent and close enough to the ball to reach it with a slight stretch. The right hand takes about the same grip as is used in passing. The other hand is on the side near the back of the ball and merely acts as a guide. On signal from the quarterback, the center extends the arms backward through the legs and centers the ball to the quarterback.

4. Punting

The kicker stands with the kicking foot slightly forward. The fingers are extended in the direction of the center. The eyes should be

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on the ball from the time it is centered until it is kicked, and the kicker should actually see the foot kick the ball. After receiving the ball, the kicker takes a short step with the kicking foot and then a second step with the other foot. The kicking leg is swung forward and, at impact, the leg is straightened to provide maximum force. The toes are pointed, and the long axis of the ball makes contact on the top of the instep. The leg should follow through well after the kick. Emphasis should be placed on dropping the ball properly. Beginners have a tendency to throw it in the air, making the punt more difficult.

Drills

Set up stations for skill practice. Rotate students to each station.

Station 1 - Stance Practice

Students work with a partner and practice getting into the proper stance position. When stance form is mastered, partners can practice getting into position and racing to cones five yards away. Offensive players should use a 3-point stance with toes pointed forward and head up. Defensive players usually use a 4-point stance with more weight on hands. Blockers should avoid falling and should stay on their toes and in front of defensive player.

Station 2 - Centering and Carrying the Ball

Students work in pairs and practice centering to each other. The player receiving the ball tucks the ball in and runs 5 to 10 yards.

Station 3 - Passing and Receiving with a Partner

Students work in pairs and practice passing and receiving the ball. Place emphasis on proper throwing and catching technique. Begin practice with short passes to a stationary receiver. After success, practice throwing to moving receivers, placing emphasis on leading the receiver with the pass.

Station 4 - Punting

Concentrate on technique rather than distance when teaching punting. Emphasize keeping the head down with the eyes on the ball. Drop the football rather than tossing it upward prior to the kick. Work in groups of three. One player is the punter, one the receiver, and one receives the pass from the punt receiver.

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Teaching Hints

Use instructional cues for throwing:

1. Turn the non-throwing side toward the direction of the throw.
2. Throw the ball with an overhand motion.
3. Step toward the pass receiver.

Instructional cues help improve catching technique:

1. Thumbs together for a high pass (above shoulder level).
2. Thumbs apart for a low pass (below shoulder level).
3. Reach for the ball, give, and bring the ball to the body.

Instructional cues for centering include the following:

1. Reach forward for the ball.
2. Snap the ball with the dominant hand.
3. Guide the ball with the non-dominant hand.

Instructional cues for punting are:

1. Drop the football; don't toss it upward.
2. Keep the eyes focused on the ball.
3. Kick upward and through the ball.
4. Contact the ball on the outer side of the instep.

Place signs that describe key points for each skill on cones at each station. Instructional cues should also be placed on the signs so students can analyze their form and performance.

Junior size footballs are best for this age group.

The ball should be carried with the arm on the outside and the end of the ball tucked into the notch formed by the elbow and arm. The fingers add support for the carry.

For beginning punters, using a round foam rubber ball will be easier than kicking a football. Foam rubber footballs are the next step before using junior size footballs.