

Flag Football Conditioning Drills

High knees

Objective: This football conditioning drill is a calisthenic exercise designed to help players build endurance. While it offers many physical benefits and can be incorporated into a variety of workouts, we particularly like using this football drill as a way to warm up the body before practice or a game, and get the blood flowing.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: Start jogging while bringing your knees up to your chest (aim for a 90-degree angle or higher). Let your feet only touch the ground for a moment before quickly switching back to the other leg. Look straight ahead, keep your chest up and pump your arms as you rapidly and smoothly make your movements downfield. The faster and sharper your movements, the more cardio work being done.

Tips: Don't do this drill if you're already fatigued. Football conditioning drills are meant to prepare your body, increase flexibility, and improve endurance. If you're extremely exhausted before you even begin, your muscles will be too strained to appropriately build strength.

Lunges

Objective: Lunges target the complete lower body, from quads to glutes to calves. When they're done in repetition, they increase flexibility, and shape and strengthen leg muscles, while also engaging the core.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: Start with your right leg in front and the left leg behind, making sure there's enough space between them for stability. Putting all of the weight in your front foot, lunge straight down, dropping your back knee so that it almost touches the ground. Your front leg should bend to a 90-degree angle. Then, slowly straighten your front leg so that you return to a stance. Take an oversized step with the opposite foot and complete a lunge on that side. With every step, keep your opposite arm forward as you complete the lunge. Switch off legs until you've reached the finishing point.

Tips: To avoid injury, make sure your back knee doesn't make contact with the ground when lunging. Additionally, both of your knees should be aligned and never collapse inward—wobbly knees are a fast way to get hurt. It's okay to start this drill slow and perfect the form. As you develop, you can take youth football conditioning drills at a faster pace.

Butt kicks

Objective: Butt kicks are a popular drill in every sport, but especially football. This cardio exercise strengthens and builds flexibility in the glutes and hamstrings. It's a perfect way to warm up the lower body and get the heart rate up before practice or a game.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: Keep your upper body straight and eyes up as you begin to run. But instead of taking a traditional running form, drive your heel to your glutes at each step—get it? “Butt kicks.” You want to quickly bring your heel all the way back to your bottom, stretching out your quad. Pump your arms with each step, helping you get more and more momentum.

Tips: Keep in mind that this football conditioning drill is not a race. It’s less about getting from point A to point B as quickly as possible and more about completing the full movement of reaching the heel back. Remember: technique first, then speed.

Quick steps

Objective: Some youth football conditioning drills are intensive cardio-focused exercises—and quick steps is one of them. These movements are done so rapidly and sharply that after a few reps, you’re sure to sweat. This is a great football speed workout that builds quick feet.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: To begin this football conditioning drill, you first need to take the proper stance. Slightly bend your knees, place your weight on the balls of your feet, keep your eyes up and your arms in front of you. Then, as quickly as you possibly can, take small, choppy steps—almost like running in place—while simultaneously pumping your arms at the same high speed. Run all the way through the cone to complete this drill.

Tips: Football speed training can take many forms, and this drill is an easy way to help you increase agility. After all, the faster and

quicker the steps, the better the footwork. If you want to add a challenge, implement throwing and catching a football with a teammate to this drill. It forces you to react to a play, while still focusing on quick feet—an important aspect in [every flag football position](#).

Sumo squats

Objective: Sumo squats are all about the glutes and the inner thigh muscles. Feet positioning is what makes this squat different from a traditional one and an excellent football conditioning drill. The combination of a wide stance and toes pointed at 45-degrees really works those inner leg muscles more than ever. Often these muscles are left ignored, but the sumo squat is an instant reminder that they're there and working hard.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: To begin this drill, face forward toward the opposite cone. In one smooth motion, take an oversized step, swinging your back leg forward while rotating your hips 90 degrees. When you have completely turned sideways, plant your leg on the ground about 6 inches wider than your shoulders, with your toe pointing at a 45-degree angle. Then bend into a lunge on your planted foot, putting all the weight into that foot and extending your back leg straight. Aim to lower your hips until they're parallel with the ground. Slowly press back up through your heels, keeping your core tight, and then shift your weight to the other leg and complete a lunge on the other side. As you make your way to a stance, swing your back leg up as you rotate your body 180 degrees so that you're facing the opposite side. Complete a lunge

on both legs as before, and continue this drill until you've reached the finishing point.

Tips: To make this a fun football conditioning drill—no one said squats are a party—countdown out loud the number of squats you have to do to reach the finish line. You can even incorporate music and squat to the rhythm of a song. “Eye of the Tiger” anyone?

Karaoke

Objective: Love it or hate it, karaoke is a staple football conditioning drill. It's designed to loosen up the hips and improve agility and speed. It's also an excellent way to practice those quick feet skills that are essential in flag football. All around, this is one of the most classic football conditioning drills out there.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: To start this football conditioning drill, turn your body so that you're facing sideways. In this scenario, let's say you're standing with your left foot closest to the finish line. With your arms out and to the sides, take your back foot—the right one in this case—and cross it over and in front of your left foot. When you're making this crossing motion, make sure that you're turning your pelvis as you bring your right foot in front of your left. Then, take a step and reach all the way behind you as you open your hips and cross your right foot behind your left leg. As you nail down this sideways form, pick up speed. Keep your core tight and remember: whenever you're crossing in front and behind, fully rotate your hips in both directions. Repeat this drill evenly on both sides.

Tips: This football conditioning drill is extremely versatile. You can take it at a slow pace for beginners, or add a kick for advanced players. You can also start slow and gradually pick up the pace for a full cardio workout.

High knees + scoop

Objective: High knees with a scoop is meant to help players fully stretch out their lower muscles before a practice or a game. The initial movements target the lower back, hips and glutes, while the follow through, or the scoop, works the hamstrings and the calves. Stretching is often an afterthought and this drill will ensure the lower body is loose and ready to compete.

Setup: Place a cone to mark where the player should start and place another cone 5 to 10 yards away where the player will finish the drill.

Directions: You're going to take this drill at a walking pace. Start by taking a step with your left foot as you grab your knee or shin of your right leg with both hands, and pull your right leg to your chest. The higher and tighter the pull, the better the stretch. Then, while balancing, plant your right heel on the ground with your toe pointing upward toward the sky. Reach down and scoop the grass on either side of your foot, while keeping your leg extended, for a full calf and hamstring stretch. Switch sides until you've reached the finishing point.

Tips: This drill requires a lot of balance to accomplish. To make it easier, when you're pulling your leg to your chest, place one hand on your knee and the other on your shin. This will help you secure a stretch without toppling over.

Quick feet drills

When it comes to quick feet and football speed workouts, the karaoke and quick steps drills above provide the form and repetition needed to improve speed and agility. But there are other methods you can use to help develop quick feet. Here are a few easy-to-implement tactics that will bring your game to next level:

- **Jump rope.** Quick feet drills require balance and focus. As simple as it sounds, jump roping accomplishes this. Many coaches have flag football players practice jump roping at home or practice until they can accomplish quick, rapid movements.
- **Lateral drills.** These football speed training drills require players to accelerate, stop, and burst without losing their balance. Lateral drills are an excellent way to hone in on coordination, quick changes in direction and acceleration. Some coaches even purchase a ladder to have their players practice quick feet and keep youth conditioning drills fun, but you can also set up small cones as well.
- **Agility drills.** Quick feet, football speed training and agility all overlap in one way or another. That's why we often tell players to look at our agility drills when thinking of a strategy for quick feet. Plus, many agility drills include an actual football, so it's a great way to change up the repetition of short, choppy steps.