

Flag Pulling Drills

How to pull a flag in flag football

Before we dive into flag pulling drills, let's first break down the proper way to remove the ball-carrier's flags. The biggest mistakes players make are grabbing the flag at the wrong spot, not aligning their body correctly, and overrunning the ball-carrier. Instead, using these techniques consistently will improve your chances of removing the ball-carrier's flags.

- **Correct stance:** The initial position you want to take when pulling an opponent's flags is similar to the stance you would take in tackle football—the difference is that you're pulling their flags instead of physically tackling the player. First, align yourself in front of the ball-carrier, which will give you more time to pull their flags and make it difficult for them to get around you. Then, square up your shoulders and slightly bend your knees, keeping your eyes on the flags (not the player).
- **Break down.** As you reach your opponent, think about breaking down defensively by shuffling your feet as you slow your speed. Remember to align your body and position yourself in front of the ball-carrier as you break down.
- **Two hands, two flags.** Always use both hands to go for both flags. If you try to just pull one flag with one hand, or one flag with two hands, your odds of successfully "tackling" the ball-carrier decrease tremendously.
- **Aim for the base of the flag.** There are a [few different types of flags](#) organizations use. Some release with Velcro, while others use a pop socket. Some leagues have Triple Threat

Belts where the entire belt comes off when a flag is pulled. In every case, you should always try to pull the flag as close to the base of the belt as possible. Grip it firmly and yank straight down in a swiping motion.

3 best flag pulling drills for all levels

Tunnel drill

Setup: Not only is this flag pulling drill fun and effective, but it also requires zero equipment. Win, win, win! To start, create a tunnel by having three defensive players stand in one vertical line and three other defensive players stand in another vertical line about 5 feet across from each other. All of these defensive players should be facing forward in the same direction. They will remain stationary during this drill. An offensive player should face the tunnel, standing far enough back to get a running start.

Directions: The offensive player's goal is to run through the tunnel of defensive players as fast as he or she can without having their flags removed. The defensive players must remain stationary and may only use their inside hand to remove the flag. They can't use both hands or turn their body to use their outside hand.

Tips: The key to this drill is to keep your eyes on the flags, instead of the player, when attempting to remove them. It's also harder to properly grip the flag when you're stationary and the ball-carrier is moving. That's why you want to practice grabbing the flag firmly at the base and swiping straight down to successfully stop your opponent.

Zig zag drill

Setup: This flag pulling drill is great for all ages as it breaks down the exact steps needed to remove the ball-carrier's flags. To start, have a set of defensive players line up in two staggered vertical lines about 5 yards apart. They will remain stationary, facing forward with their hands on their hips. An offensive player should face the defenders, with enough room to get a running start.

Directions: To start this flag pulling drill, the offensive player runs to the first defensive player in the line. As they reach their target, they need to break down, square up, and quickly remove both flags using both hands. Then, they sprint to the next staggered player in the opposite vertical line and practice the same motions. The drill is complete after they've reached every player and removed their flags.

Tips: The zig zag drill is a great way to practice breaking down as you meet the ball-carrier. To do this effectively, keep your knees bent and stay low so you can easily slow your speed and shuffle back and forth as needed.

Cone drill

Setup: This flag football defense drill creates a competitive 1 on 1 environment. To set up, place 4 cones 10 yards apart to create a square. If you don't have cones, you can use any visible markers, such as tennis balls or even shoes. You need at least one offensive player and one defensive player to complete this drill.

Directions: The offensive player will act as the ball-carrier, standing at the cone in the lower left corner of the square. The defender stands on the opposite side diagonally from them at the upper right cone. At start, both players will sprint around the cone in front of them—the offensive player will round the upper left

cone, moving upward. The defensive player will round the lower right cone, moving downward. Then, both players will meet in the middle for a 1 on 1 showdown. The defender wants to pull the ball-carrier's flag(s) before they can escape the square. The offensive player should practice a variety of moves, such as sliding or spinning, to beat the defender.

Tips: This drill is easy to adjust for all levels. For younger players, you can make the square smaller so that it's less intensive. You can also add an extra defender to challenge the offensive player even more.

Here's the best part of flag pulling drills: they're actually fun. Unlike repetitive and technical workouts, these are engaging, quick, and competitive. Throwing them into your practice routine will help you make better gametime decisions and develop a strong defensive skill set.