**XOXO – THE BASICS**

* There are 4 Quarters. Each quarter is 15 minutes. The clock stops during the game for different reasons.
* Each team gets 3 timesout per half (2 quarters). They do not roll over to the next half.
* There are 2 teams, each can have 11 players on the field at a time.
* Coin toss at the beginning of the game decides who gets the ball first (the winning team can pick to kick off or receive)
* **Offense**—Team that has the ball – Has 4 **tries (downs)** to go 10 yards.
* **Defense**—Tries to keep the offense from scoring or getting a first down.
* The field is 100 yards from end zone to end zone and each end zone is 10 yards deep (total of 120 yards).
* *If a team does not make it 10 yards in 3 tries (downs) they have two choices: they can punt the ball to the other team or “go for it” on 4th down. If the team “goes for it” on 4th down and they do not gain enough yards for a 1st down, then the ball is turned over to the other team. If the team is within field goal range (generally less than 50 yards from the field goal), they can attempt a field goal (3 points) on 4th down. If the field goal is missed, the other team gets the ball.*
* Once a team gets a touchdown, or field goal, they have to kick the ball to the other team. This is called a kickoff.

**OFFENSE**

* The team on offense has the ball.
* They are trying to get to the end zone.
* They have 4 tries to make it 10 yards.
* If they make it, they get four more tries. This is called a FIRST DOWN.
* 2nd and 5 means the team is going for its second try and has 5 of the original 10 yards to go.
* Once at or near the end zone, the offensive team can try for a touchdown (6 pts. + 1pt Extra kick) or a Field Goal (3 pts.) Sometimes after getting a touchdown, the team will try for a “two point conversion.”

**OFFENSIVE POSITIONS**

* **Quarterback**—The guy who either hands off/tosses the ball to the running back or throws/passes it down the field to a wide receiver.
* **Center—**The guy who hikes the ball to the quarterback.
* **Running Back**—Runs the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. In some plays, the running back may run a short route and catch the ball from the quarterback.
* **Wide Receiver**—Catches the ball from the quarterback.
* **Offensive Line—**The bigger guys that try to keep the defense from stopping the quarterback or tackling the running backs or receivers.
* **Tight ends**—a mix between linemen and receivers (sometimes they block for the quarterback/running Back and sometimes they catch the ball like receivers).

**DEFENSIVE POSITIONS**

* **Defensive Line**—Big guys in the middle trying to tackle the quarterback
* **Corner Back**—Tries to stop receiver from catching the ball by covering him during a play, these guys are fast and agile
* **Free Safety** – Tries to stop receivers from catching the ball and generally provide support for the corner backs
* **Linebackers**—Mix between defensive line and free safety—these guys are generally bigger than free safeties. Depending on the play, they will try to tackle the quarterback/ running back or they may drop back (cover wide receivers) to help free safeties.

**SPECIAL TEAMS**

* Special teams players come on the field during 1) kickoff, 2) field goal or 3) punt
* **Place kicker**—The guy who kicks the ball for a kickoff or field goal
* **Punter**—They guy who kicks the ball during a punt
* **Kickoff returner/Punt returner**—The guy who catches the ball after the kick and runs toward his end zone
* **Blockers**—The guys who block and make room for the returner to run the ball towards his end zone
* *Block in the back*—This is a penalty that is generally called during a kickoff/punt return. If a player on the return team uses a player on the kicking team’s forward momentum to make him fall before he can tackle the punt/kickoff returner.
* *Fair catch*—A kick returner can call for a fair catch before he catches the ball during a kickoff or punt. This means that the kicking team cannot tackle him and he cannot run with the ball after he catches it. A kick returner calls for a fair catch by waving his arm above his head BEFORE catching the ball.

**PENALTIES**

There are a number of penalties in football. Each gives the other team 5, 10, or 15 yards. Penalties are important because they help to protect all of the players in the game.

Some of the most frequent calls are:

* **Holding –***Offensive Holding* is when the team with the ball tries to block a defensive player by grabbing/holding his body or uniform or throws the defensive player to the ground. Offensive holding is generally called on offensive linemen or other players blocking for the Quarterback. *Defensive Holding* is called when a defensive player blocks an offensive player by grabbing or holding his body or uniform. HOWEVER if a defensive player grabs or holds a player who is trying to catch the ball, the penalty is called **Pass Interference.**
* **Off-sides –**When the Defense suddenly moves forward before the other team snaps (hikes) the ball.
* **False Start –**When the Offense (team with the ball) suddenly moves in an attempt to get the defense to move “OFFSIDES”
* **Personal Foul –**Examples of this might be a player grabbing another player’s face mask, punching another player, trying to make helmet to helmet contact or a horse collar (when a defensive player pulls an offensive player down by the gap between his shoulder pads and his neck). This is worth 15 yards and in extreme circumstances they guilty player can be ejected from (thrown out of) the game.
* *Half the distance to the goal*—If the yardage of the penalty would put the offensive team in either its own end zone or the opposing team’s end zone, the ball will be placed halfway between the previous line of scrimmage and the end zone.

**COMMON TERMS**

* **Two Point Conversion**—When the offensive team opts to “go for two,” rather than kick an extra point after a touchdown. The ball is placed at the 2 yard line (NFL) or 3 yard line (NCAA) and the offense has one down to make it into the end zone. If they fail to reach the end zone in one try, the team gets no extra points and then kicks the ball off to the opposing team.
* **Safety**—When the defensive team tackles an offensive player in the offense’s end zone. This is worth 2 points and the offensive team is forced to kick off the ball to the opposing team.
* **Huddle**—When the team gets together behind the line of scrimmage to plan their next play.
* **Sack**—When a quarterback (and only the quarterback) is tackled behind the line of scrimmage. If another player is tackled behind the line of scrimmage it is called a loss of yardage or being tackled for a loss.
* **Turnover**—When the offense loses possession of the ball and the defense recovers it. There are two types of turnovers: Interception and Fumble.
* **Interception**—When the defense catches the ball that is being thrown by the QB or when it bounces off of an offensive player and is airborne. If the defensive player catches the ball before it hits the ground they can run it towards their end zone and the ball is “turned over”
* **Fumble**—When an offensive player drops the ball OR when a defensive player strips the ball from an offensive player.
* **Strip**—When a defensive player forces an offensive player to drop the ball.
* **Icing the kicker**—This is a strategy used by some coaches. When a game-winning or game-tying field goal is about to be kicked, the defensive team’s coach will call a timeout right before the kicker kicks the field goal. This is mostly a mind game.
* **Red Zone**—When the offense gets to (or within) the 20 yard line on the opposing team’s side of the field.
* **Challenge**—Certain plays/rulings can be challenged by the coach. This means that the referees will review the play to see if a mistake was made. If the original call was right then the challenging team is charged a timeout.
* **Official Review**—The Replay Booth (the referees who review plays) can review any play to make sure there was no mistake made. If an official review is called, there is no risk of a penalty.
* **Pick Six**—When a defensive player intercepts the ball and runs it all the way back to the offensive team’s end zone.
* **Regular Season**—These are games scheduled before the season starts. These games determine which teams make it to the postseason.
* **Post Season**—These are games played after the regular season. They can be played in 2 forms depending on the league: Playoffs (NFL and FCS) & Bowl Games (FBS).

**LEAGUES**

* **National Football League (NFL)—**Professional football league in the United States. These players a paid to play football and are regulated by the NFL Commissioner. There are two conferences within the NFL: American Football Conference (AFC) and National Football Conference (NFC). The Super Bowl poses the AFC champion against the NFC champion.
* **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)—**Oversees college football and regulates it as well. There are several divisions of college football: Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and Football Championship Subdivision (FCS). The FBS schools are generally larger schools that play in bowl games in the Bowl Championship Series (BCS). FCS schools are generally smaller schools. FCS has a playoff system for its postseason while the FBS does not (until 2014).