Fundamental Skills Checklist

Throwing

- **Grip** – Grip the ball with the ring and little fingers crossing the laces and your thumb underneath. Index finger should be over a seam, and your thumb and index fingers should make an “L” shape. Hold firm enough to keep control, but not tightly.

- **Throwing Stance** – Face perpendicular to the target. If you throw with your right hand, turn to the right, and vice versa. Turn pivot foot (opposite of throwing arm) so it is also facing target.

- **Eyes** – Always fix your eyes on your target.

- **Arm to Ear** – Keep arm near your ear. Stabilize it with your non-throwing hand.

- **Wind Back** – Remove your non-throwing hand from the ball. Bring arm back, stopping just behind your ear.

- **Step** – To build momentum, step forward with your non-dominant (pivot) foot, and move your non-dominant elbow toward your back. Hips and shoulders should rotate in the direction of the pass.

- **Release** – Quickly swing your throwing arm forward in a circular arc and release ball mid-way through the circle. Football should roll off your fingertips and your index finger should be the last part of your body that touches the ball which provides the desired “spiral” effect.

- **Follow Through** – After release of the football, throwing hand should head toward your non-dominant hip, palm facing away from you.

Pass Drops

- **Stance** – As you receive the snap, turn sideways in the direction of your throwing arm.

- **Step** – First step is powerful, quick, deep step with the back foot. Next steps are crossover steps. Finish with a plant step, with your front shoulder dipping down slightly to help maintain balance.

- **Eyes** – Always fix your eyes on your target downfield.

Catching

- **Target** – Provide the quarterback with a good target by hands out-stretched.

- **Hands** – Always catch the ball with your hands away from the body. Arms should be extended out about three-fourths of the way to allow room to cushion the catch.

- **Chest** – Once ball is caught, bring hands and ball into body and tightly hold the ball under your armpit.

- **Triangle** – For balls above waist-height, put index finger and thumbs together to form a triangle.

- **Cradle** – For low balls, keep your little fingers and elbow together and cradle the catch. You can also cradle the catch for deep passes that are over your shoulder by having your pinkies and elbows in front of your chest.

- **Eyes** – Keep your eyes on the ball until it is in your hand.

- **Secure** – Cover the front tip of the football with your fingers and use your free arm to maintain balance and to protect the ball from opponents.
Running the Football

- **Grip** – Index finger directly over the tip of the ball, while the rest of the hand grasps as much as the surface as possible.
- **Wrist and Forearm** – Support the rest of the ball with the inside the wrist and forearm.
- **Finger Tips** – Tips of the fingers down to the middle of the forearm sustain the football.
- **Firm** – Have a firm grip on the ball to avoid fumbling the ball.

Securing the Football

- **Hands** – Outside hand (away from the defense) should have the ball.
- **Chest** – As defense approaches, tuck the ball to your chest.

Quarterback/Running Back Exchange

- **Top Half of the “Pocket”** – Inside elbow should be even with the shoulders. Forearm is horizontal with the ground. Players inside hand should have their palm down so they are ready to accept the point of the ball.
- **Bottom Half of the “Pocket”** – Outside elbow is straight down from the shoulder. Forearm is horizontal across the midsection. The outside hand is slightly bent with the palm up, ready to accept the other end of the ball. Fingers should be pointing toward the quarterback.
- **Receiving the Ball** – Both hands should instantly secure the ball upon contact.
- **Eyes** – Focused on where the play is designed to go.

Center/Quarterback Exchange

- **Under - Center Snap** – Center is in two-point stance (feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, elbows resting on knees, head up). Reach throwing hand out to football, and grip the ball with the first knuckle of the thumb placed in between the white line and the first lace. Palm of the hand should rest on the outside of the ball, with four fingers spread across the back. Lift head before snapping the ball. As it is snapped, turn hand inward so ball is delivered sideways.
- **Side Snap** –

Two Point Stance

- **Feet** – Feet should be about shoulder width apart, or a little wider.
- **Hands** – Palms of the hands on the knees, arms slightly bent.
- **Back** – Slightly hunched over.

Running Pass Routes

- **Start** – Good stance and start. Gain as much ground as you can.
- **Stem** – Run toward the outside shoulder of the defender in an attempt to get him to run his hips away from the line of scrimmage.
- **Break** – Making a direction-changing cut. Stay low, and maintain proper balance by keeping your shoulders directly over your feet.
- **Burst** – Attempt to create additional separation from the defender. Different routes require different bursts (i.e. Curl requires receive to come off the break with two steps back to the quarterback and then stop. Post requires a full-speed, continued burst after the break.)
Flag Grabbing or “Tackling”

- **Balance** – Stay low, and in control of your body.
- **Steps** – Shorten your steps. Fast, choppy steps are best.
- **Arms** – Arms out slightly for balance and your shoulders are above your feet.
- **Eyes** – Watch players belly button, and move toward your target (flags).
- **Reach** – Reach for the top of the flag (near the plug) and firmly grab the flag and pull hard.