American Football Positions

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. In a typical running play, which position most often takes a handoff and carries the ball upfield?
   - A. Running back
   - B. Cornerback
   - C. Punter
   - D. Defensive tackle

   Correct answer: A. Running back
   Running backs often carry the ball on plays that begin with a handoff from the quarterback.

2. Which position usually looks downfield and chooses which receiver to throw to on a passing play?
   - A. Defensive end
   - B. Offensive guard
   - C. Quarterback
   - D. Placekicker

   Correct answer: C. Quarterback
   The quarterback typically receives the snap and reads the defense to choose a passing target.

3. Which offensive position commonly begins a play near a sideline and runs a route to catch a pass?
   - A. Offensive center
   - B. Wide receiver
   - C. Linebacker
   - D. Defensive tackle

   Correct answer: B. Wide receiver
   Wide receivers often line up away from the offensive line and run routes downfield.

4. Which defender often lines up across from a wide receiver in man coverage?
   - A. Center
   - B. Offensive tackle
   - C. Running back
   - D. Cornerback

   Correct answer: D. Cornerback
   Cornerbacks commonly cover receivers, including players lined up near the sideline.

5. Which defensive position commonly begins a play behind the cornerbacks and provides help on deep passes?

A. Offensive guard
B. Safety
C. Nose tackle
D. Fullback

Correct answer: B. Safety
Safeties often align deep, where they can defend passes beyond the first line of coverage.

6. The offensive line has a center with one teammate immediately on either side. What are the two positions next to the center called?

A. Guards
B. Tackles
C. Tight ends
D. Slot receivers

Correct answer: A. Guards
The guards line up directly to the left and right of the center. The tackles typically line up outside the guards.

7. On a typical five-player offensive line, which position is outside the guard but inside a tight end who lines up next to the line?

A. Slot receiver
B. Center
C. Safety
D. Offensive tackle

Correct answer: D. Offensive tackle
The tackle is usually the outermost of the five offensive linemen. A tight end can attach outside the tackle.

8. One eligible offensive player blocks next to a tackle on one play, then runs a route from that spot on the next. Which usual position fits?

A. Nose tackle
B. Left guard
C. Tight end
D. Cornerback

Correct answer: C. Tight end
Tight ends commonly combine blocking and receiving. A player attached to the outside of a tackle can fill either role.

9. Which defenders usually align behind the defensive line and can either help stop a run or drop into pass coverage?

A. Linebackers
B. Offensive guards
C. Tight ends
D. Punters

Correct answer: A. Linebackers
Linebackers usually play between the defensive line and the deepest defenders. Their assignments can change with the play.

10. On a common field goal setup, which player receives the snap and puts the ball on the ground for the kicker?

A. Cornerback
B. Returner
C. Gunner
D. Holder

Correct answer: D. Holder
The holder catches the snap and positions the ball for the kicker. The holder may have another regular position such as punter.

11. A fullback and a tailback line up directly behind the quarterback. The fullback is closer to the line. Who is in position to lead the tailback through a gap?

A. The punter
B. The tailback
C. The fullback
D. The outside cornerback

Correct answer: C. The fullback
The alignment puts the fullback in front of the tailback, a common starting point for a lead block.

12. In a three-lineman defensive front, what is the position called when the middle lineman aligns directly across from the offensive center?

A. Slot cornerback
B. Nose tackle
C. Outside linebacker
D. Free safety

Correct answer: B. Nose tackle
The middle lineman in that alignment is commonly called the nose tackle.

13. A defense replaces one linebacker with an extra defensive back and now plays with five defensive backs. What is that personnel package called?

A. Victory formation
B. Dime
C. Goal-line offense
D. Nickel

Correct answer: D. Nickel
Nickel personnel includes five defensive backs. The name describes the personnel count, regardless of where those players line up.

14. A diagram labels a defense as a 3–4. Under the usual naming convention, how many defensive linemen and linebackers are on the field in that base personnel?

A. Three linemen and four linebackers
B. Four linemen and three linebackers
C. Three linemen and four cornerbacks
D. Four linemen and four linebackers

Correct answer: A. Three linemen and four linebackers
The first number counts defensive linemen. The second counts linebackers. The remaining four players are defensive backs.

15. For a conventional punt, which pair acts first on the kicking team, in order?

A. The punter snaps the ball, then the safety fields it.
B. The holder fields the ball, then the returner kicks it.
C. The long snapper sends the ball back, then the punter fields it.
D. The placekicker holds the ball, then the long snapper kicks it.

Correct answer: C. The long snapper sends the ball back, then the punter fields it.
A long snap starts the punt. The punter receives the ball several yards behind the line before kicking it.