

### Tackling

There are several fundamentals to consider when teaching the skill of tackling to young athletes. Football can be an extremely violent sport. Just the idea of running full steam and colliding with another athlete is reason enough to have concern. The most important aspect of the tackle progression is head placement, but as we have learned through the course of this unit is the importance of the kinetic chain. Each fundamental skill is linked together and energy is transferred through the body with the “largest portion of kinetic energy or force being developed in the legs and trunk”. Each fundamental skill begins with leg drive. It’s important to teach the proper technique from the feet up. Doing this will give the athlete the proper fundamentals of tackling putting the athlete in a position for proper head placement lowering the risk of injury.

Proper tackling form:

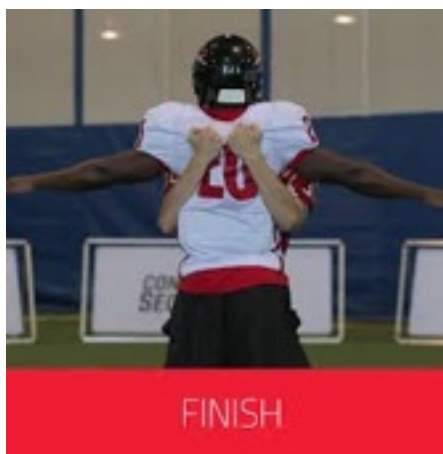
1. **Proper stance:** We begin teaching tackling from the feet up. As with almost every skill in every sport, tackling begins with a proper athletic stance. Feet shoulder width apart. A proper athletic stance, feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, and a slight bend at the hips, 45 degree angle lean, will give the athlete a stable base. This stance will also lower the athlete’s center of gravity and puts them in the best position possible to react to their opponent. This ability to be able to react quickly will help ensure the head is in the proper location while contact is initiated
2. The next step would be to make sure the athlete maintains this position or returns to this stance prior to beginning the tackling progression and understands. We teach this as short steps with the athlete “buzzes their feet”. This helps the athlete keep their body under control and maintain the proper athletic stance.
3. **Step:** After establishing a proper base and the athlete is in a proper athletic stance the next step is for the athlete to take a step toward their target. This step should be between their opponent’s legs. This will put them in a

**good position to secure the tackle and also puts them in a good position to minimize injury.**

- 4. Head Placement:** This is most important aspect of the tackle progression, because if there is a flaw in the athlete's technique it greatly increases the athlete's risk of injury. The number one rule when teaching head placement while tackling is to always keep your eyes and head up. When first learning the fundamentals of the tackle progression athletes have a tendency to drop their heads in anticipation of the tackle. The proper way to teach a safe head placement is to have the athlete remove the head from the actual tackle. We teach athletes to keep their head, eyes, and chin up. We use the phrase chest to chest when tackling, doing this will remove the head from contact.

<http://i.imgur.com/HmJg3TP.gif>

- 5. Wrap with Arms:** After the head is properly placed the next step is to have the athlete wrap up the ball carrier, this is done to secure the tackle. The arms are brought back simultaneously with the athlete's step toward the ball carrier.



6. **Shoot the hips and drive:** The last step in the progression is for the athlete to shoot their hips up through the ball carrier and drive with the feet. As the athlete shoots their hips their arms will shoot up and complete the wrapping up of the ball carrier.

Teaching the proper tackling progression will increase the athletes understanding of how their legs, hips and arms work together to keep their head from contact. Repeating these individual steps in the tackling progression will increase the strength and endurance of the core muscle groups. It will also help the athlete develop muscle memory to insure the tackle progression is done properly each and every time.

**Resources:**

**IHSA Tackling Progression Drills:** <http://www.ihsa.org/SportsActivities/BoysFootball/BestPractices/TacklingProgressionDrills.aspx>

