

Football Rules

Football is a game played by many, but understood by few. At any given game, half of the barroom or stadium will erupt in cheers on the cue of fellow fans, without really knowing what just happened. This will assist those of you who have yet to learn the game, and act as a refresher course for those in the know.

The object of football is to score as many points as possible. The team that scores the most points within a given time period is the winner. That's the easy part.

Football rules can be confusing. When it's not called "football", the game is referred to as "gridiron", because that's what the playing field is called. The gridiron has markings that resemble a grill and is 120 yards long and 53-1/3 yards wide. The 120 yards are split into five sections, each 20 yards in length. Yard lines are marked every five yards and are numbered from each goal line to the middle of the field, also called the fifty-yard mark. Confused yet? Listen to this: a gridiron consists of sidelines and end lines, and has field posts near each end zone. The end zones are 10 yards wide, located just before the field post. Field posts are used to mark field goals; they are 18.5 feet apart.

That's just a description of the field. We haven't even starting on football rules. A football game is played between two teams. NFL teams typically have fifty members or more, but only eleven may be on the playing field at any one time. Because the game is so complicated, most of the fifty players will have the opportunity to play in every game. Each team member has a specialized role, either offense or defense. Players wear systematically numbered uniforms. Every football team also has special teams.

It's hard to specify the duration of a football game, because coaches and players can be called on penalties and fouls that will extend the time of a game. Important games, like the Super Bowl, can take hours to complete. Every call must be made because there is so much riding on a game of this caliber.

Football rules dictate that each team tries to advance on the field and gain as many yards at a single time as possible. The closer the advancing team is to the goal line, the harder the opposing team must play to stop a touchdown. When defensive players tackle and get the advancing runner to the ground, the play is done and the ball is dead.

The point of football is to get touchdowns and field goals, because that is what gets the points. The team with the most points takes all the glory. If it's a championship game, the winning team will take the title as well.

Get points and win the game. If those are the basic football rules, maybe it isn't so confusing after all.