Ultimate Defensive Line Fundamentals

www.TheLinemenFactory.com
Mastering the Art of Defensive Line

The “FIST” Principle
The “FIST” Principle

The “FIST” is a symbol of the progression that a defensive linemen must go through in order to master the fundamentals of playing D-line.

Each finger on the hand represents a key component of the defensive line progression. Once all fingers, or components, have been mastered the fingers come together to make a fist. The fist is strong and solid. Without all fingers, the mastery of defensive line, or “fist” will not be strong. It is critical for defensive linemen to master all 5 components, or “fingers”, so that they can form their own fist.
Alignment & Assignment
Stance

1. Relatively balanced with just slight weight toward down hand (60/40)
2. Eyes looking through the eyebrows
3. Back flat
4. Thumb of up hand pointing up
5. Only 6 inch first step
6. Feet shoulder width apart (exception N)
7. Slight heel-to-toe stagger (exception N)
8. Covered hand **ALWAYS** down
Alignment & Assignment

**Gaps:**

Gaps are the space in between the lineman. They are labeled by letters shown below:

- A Gap: The gap between the C and the two G
- B Gap: The gap between the two G and the two T
- C Gap: The gap between the T and the TE
- D Gap: The gap next to (outside) the TE
Numerical Alignment

Shade weak = Inside foot on center’s outside foot on weak side
0 = Head up on Center
Shade strong = Inside foot on center’s outside foot on strong side
1 = Outside foot on Guard’s inside foot
2 = Head up on Guard
3 = Inside foot on guard’s outside foot
4 = Outside foot on Tackle’s inside foot
5 = Head up on Tackle
6 = Inside foot on Tackle’s outside foot
7 = Outside foot on tight end’s inside foot
8 = Head up on Tight End
9 = Inside foot on tight end’s outside foot
Numerical Alignment

LE: 6 technique
N: Shade
T: 3 Technique
RE: 9 Technique
Numerical Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LE:</td>
<td>6 technique</td>
<td>C gap responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N:</td>
<td>Shade</td>
<td>A gap responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T:</td>
<td>3 Technique</td>
<td>B gap responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE:</td>
<td>8 Technique</td>
<td>D gap responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attack
Attack

1. Explode out of stance
2. Win the collision
3. Get penetration
4. Hips, Hands, Feet
5. Punch & extend
6. Control opponent
7. Stop charge of OL
8. Hips low and behind body
9. Fast hands, fast feet
React
Keys

Each DL will have key reads that will help him defend the run and pass. We will attack and get penetration and read our keys on the run. “Read on the run”

**End:**
Base Block  
Down Block  
Down w/ Lead  
Down with Trap Block  
Reach to Block  
Scoop Block  
Double Team  
3 Step Pass Block  
5 Step Pass Block  
Cut Block

**Tackle & Nose:**
Base Block  
Down Block  
Reach Block  
Scoop Block  
Pull to  
Pull Away  
Double Team  
3 Step Pass Block  
5 Step Pass Block  
Cut Block
Keys: Ends

Vs. **BASE block** Punch and extend, force T inside and squeeze the C gap. Push pull to escape to tackle ball carrier.

Vs. **DOWN block** force T inside and squeeze the C gap. Look inside for trapping guard or lead block from FB, wrong arm.

Vs. **REACH block** to the play. Punch and extend, fast feet down the LOS until escape

Vs. **SCOOP Block** away, squeeze down and look for BCR, don't chase play away, play boot first.
**Keys: Ends**

**Vs. Down Block with Trap**
- Punch and extend, force T inside and squeeze the C gap. Wrong arm pulling guard.

**Vs. DOWN block with FB**
- Lead force T inside and squeeze the C gap. Wrong arm FB

**Vs. DOUBLE TEAM block**
- Drop hips & knee into blockers and stay very low. Do not give ground. Penetrate through window. Pull OL with you.

**Vs. PASS Rush QB**
- Staying in C/D gap. Keep contain at all costs, force everything inside.
Keys: Tackles & Nose

Vs. BASE block Punch and extend, force G inside and squeeze the B gap. Push pull or stab to escape to tackle ball carrier.

Vs. DOWN block penetrate through B gap & chase ball carrier. If you get stuck by T block, use stab escape and pursue.

Vs. REACH block on back side play. Punch and extend keeping inside leverage, fast feet down the LOS until escape, don’t get reached...ever!

Vs. REACH Block to play side, punch keeping outside arm leverage, escape and pursue down LOS.
**Keys: Tackles & Nose**

Vs. **Down Block with Pull**
penetrate through A gap & chase ball carrier. If you get stuck by C block, use stab or rip and slip escape and pursue.

Vs. **Pull Away**
Get in the hip of the G and follow him to the RB for the tackle. If to slow, then use Stab or rip and slip technique.

Vs. **DOUBLE TEAM**
block
Drop hips & knee into blocker and stay very low. Do not give ground. Penetrate through the window. Hold onto OL.

Vs. **PASS**
Pursuit QB staying in B/A gap.
ESCAPE
ESCAPE

Principles:

• Pre-reads (heavy, light, formation, D & D, personnel, tells)
• Movement (fast feet, fast hands)
• Hand separation
• Primary escape move, counter move
• Secondary escape move, counter move
• Combo escape moves
ESCAPE

Primary Escape Moves:

• Rip:
• Push/Pull
• Chop (Hand Fighting)
ESCAPE

Secondary Escape Moves:

- Stab
- Swim
ESCAPE

Combo Escape Moves:

• Chop & Rip
• Rip & Slip*
• Rip & Stab
• Chop & Swim
• Pull & Swim
• Chop & Stab
Finish

1. EFFORT EFFORT EFFORT!
2. Angle of pursuit
3. Tackle
4. Turnover
5. Play to the EOW, Demand it!
Fast flow pursuit angles

**Backside C**: Check for reverse/boot, then insurance angle
- **R**: Tackle to force inside
- **FS**: Backside cutback
- **S**: Tackle to spill outside
- **M**: Tackle to spill outside
- **W**: Backside cutback

**Playside C**: Tackle to force inside
- Playside E: Force outside, pursuit down line
- Backside E: Check Boot/Reverse,
- **N**: Pursuit down line
- **T**: Pursuit down line
Near flow pursuit angles

**Backside C**: Check for reverse/boot, then insurance angle

**SS**: Tackle to force inside

**FS**: Backside cutback

**S**: Tackle to spill outside

**M**: Tackle to spill outside

**W**: Backside cutback

**Playside C**: Tackle to force inside

**Playside E**: Force outside, pursuit down line

**Backside E**: Check Boot/Reverse

**N**: Pursuit down line

**T**: Pursuit down line
Drills

Each drill is focused on one of the 5 fingers. A natural progression is used for maximum development and efficiency.
# Drills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ali &amp; Ass</th>
<th>Attack</th>
<th>React</th>
<th>Escape</th>
<th>Finish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call outs</td>
<td>1 legged get off</td>
<td>Run Read Circuit</td>
<td>Form fit-rip</td>
<td>Tackle 1v2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game plan calls</td>
<td>2 legged get off</td>
<td>Walk thru reads</td>
<td>Form fit-rip &amp; slip</td>
<td>Draw pursuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punch from knees</td>
<td>Down block</td>
<td>Form fit push/pull</td>
<td>Screen pursuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punch from stance</td>
<td>Base block</td>
<td>Form fit stab</td>
<td>QB turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From fit extension</td>
<td>Reach block</td>
<td>Hand fights</td>
<td>RB turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>¾ speed run thrus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Down with pull</td>
<td>Full speed 1v1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Down with lead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>½ line cards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drills: Alignment & Assignment

“Call outs”

Ex. Over to Under

\[
\begin{align*}
E & \rightarrow & T & \rightarrow & N & \rightarrow & E \\
E & \rightarrow & T & \rightarrow & N & \rightarrow & E \\
E & \rightarrow & T & \rightarrow & N & \rightarrow & E \\
E & \rightarrow & T & \rightarrow & & & \end{align*}
\]
React: Key Read Circuit

Station 1: Double Team
Station 2: Reach
Station 3: Pass

Station 4: Pull
Station 5: Base
Station 6: Scoop

▲ = Cone
● = OL
★ = DL
😊 = Coach
Escape: Run Thrus

Juniors    Sophomores

Rip Left!

= OL
= DL
= Coach
DL Drill Progression

1) Stance

2) Get off
   a) 1 legged get off on movement
   b) 2 step get off on movement
   c) Change of direction (COD) drill on movement

3) Alignment & Assignment
   a) Call out – Huddle break, strength call, point to gap, get off *

4) Attack
   a) Punch from knees (sled, body, bag)*
   b) Punch from stance (sled, body, bag), *, **
   c) Form fit extension (body, bag) **, ***

5) React
   a) Down block
   b) Base block
   c) Reach block
   d) Pass
   e) Double team
   f) Trap/pull
   g) Lead (ends)
   h) Pre-reads

6) Escape
   a) Primary
   b) Secondary
   c) Combo

7) Finish (EOW)
   a) Tackling *, **, ***
   b) Turnover, **, ***
   c) Pursuit angles *, **, ***

* = Focus for Spring camp  
*** = Focus for pre-season

** = Focus for Summer camp