

The Philosophy of Holding

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Offensive and defensive holding is defined as restriction that has an adverse effect on a defender's opportunity to make a play, such as, rush the quarterback, tackle the runner, block a defender, run a pass pattern, et cetera.

The nature of the game of football is such that players use their hands and arms to push, pull, tackle or otherwise restrict the movement of their opponents on every play. Over the history of the game, the rules that apply to the use of offensive player's hands and arms have been considerably liberalized. Defensive players have always been allowed to use their hands to push, pull or ward off an opponent in an attempt to make a play on the quarterback, the runner or get to a loose ball.

It has been said, "You can call holding on every play." If that is a true statement, we would have a foul called on every play and there would be no pleasure in playing, watching or officiating the game.

Every grab does not rise to the level of a foul for holding. Therefore, a philosophy has been developed to enable officials to apply the rule in a meaningful manner. To rise to the level of a foul for offensive holding, the restriction must have an effect on the play. The defender must have a clear opportunity to make a play at or near the point of attack. Or, the restriction is immediate or so flagrant, such as, an immediate take down depriving a defender who is not in the vicinity of the play of any opportunity to get near the point of attack.

OFFENSIVE HOLDING CATEGORIES:

- **Grab & Restrict:** The blocker controls the defender with two hands outside the defender's frame usually at the shoulders. The blocker controls the defender's movement preventing him from reaching for the runner to make a tackle or rushing the passer. The key to recognizing this as a foul will be the defender's unsuccessful attempts to tackle the runner or rush the quarterback.
- **Hook & Restrict:** The blocker hooks the defender above the waist with one hand and controls or redirects defender's movement. This usually occurs when the blocker's feet are beat and the defender is even with him or past him.
- **Take Down:** The blocker grabs the defender with two hands or hooks him with one hand above the waist and takes him to the ground.

- Reverse Take Down: The blocker, who appears to be getting overpowered or run over, grabs the defender inside the frame of his body and pulls the defender down on top of him as he is falling backward.
- Tackle: This usually occurs when the blocker loses contact with the defender; or the defender beats the blockers feet and is even with him or beyond him, or the defender is running away from the blocker. The blocker grabs or hooks the defender around the waist or below, or dives and hooks the defender with one or both arms or hands at the lower legs or ankles causing the defender to go to the ground.

DEFENSIVE HOLDING CATEGORIES:

- Pull & Shoot: Can occur on any scrimmage down or scrimmage kick. The defender deliberately pulls the offensive blocker toward him or down the line creating a gap for a teammate to run through and tackle the runner, rush the quarterback or block the kick.
- Grab & Restrict: This usually occurs on a running play when a defensive lineman grabs or hooks an offensive lineman and obviously prevents him from getting to his blocking assignment. The defensive lineman is obviously not making an attempt to get to the runner. This often creates an opportunity for an unblocked defender to tackle the runner for a loss of yardage. If the offensive lineman manages to get to his blocking assignment no foul should be called. **NOTE**: This often occurs when a defensive lineman is being doubled teamed.
- Grab or Hook Eligible Receiver: Prior to the pass being released, the defender prevents an eligible receiver from running his pass route. **NOTE**: Tight Ends are treated as interior linemen if they stay in to block and as receivers if they are obviously trying to run a pass pattern.