

Position Duties

Offense

Defensive end (DE)—the two defensive ends play on opposite outside edges of the defensive line. Their function is to attack the passer or stop offensive runs to the outer edges of the line of scrimmage (most often referred to as "containment"). The faster of the two is usually placed on the left because that is a right-handed [quarterback's](#) blind side.

Defensive tackle (DT)—(sometimes called a *defensive guard*), defensive tackles are side-by-side linemen who are between the defensive ends. Their function is to rush the passer (if they can get past the offensive linemen blocking them), and stop running plays directed at the middle of the line of scrimmage. A defensive tackle that lines up directly across from the ball (and therefore, is almost nose-to-nose with the offense's center) is often called a *nose tackle* or [nose guard](#). The nose tackle is most common in the 3-4 defense and the quarter defense. Most defensive sets have from one to two defensive tackles. Sometimes, but not often, a team will employ three defensive tackles.

Linebacker (LB)—linebackers play behind the defensive line and perform various duties depending on the situation, including rushing the passer, covering receivers, and defending against the run. Most defensive sets have between two and four linebackers. Linebackers are usually divided into three types: strongside (Left- or Right- Outside Linebacker: LOLB or ROLB); middle (MLB); and weakside (LOLB or ROLB). The strongside linebacker usually lines up across from the offense's tight end; he is usually the strongest LB because he must be able to shed lead blockers quickly enough to tackle the running back. The middle linebacker must correctly identify the offense's formations and what adjustments the entire defense must make. Because of this, the middle linebacker is nicknamed the 'quarterback of the defense'. The weakside linebacker is usually the most athletic or fastest linebacker because he usually must defend an open field.

Cornerback (CB)—typically two players that primarily cover the wide receivers. Cornerbacks attempt to prevent successful quarterback passes by either swatting the airborne ball away from the receiver or by [catching the pass themselves](#). In rushing situations, their job is to contain the rusher.

Safety (FS or SS)—the safeties are the last line of defense (farthest from the line of scrimmage) and usually help the corners with deep-pass coverage. The *strong safety* (SS) is usually the larger and stronger of the two, providing extra protection against run plays by standing somewhere between the free safety and the line of scrimmage. The *free safety* (FS) is usually the smaller and faster of the two, providing variable and extra pass coverage.