Using Microsoft Word to Design Your Playbook
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We all want to create playbooks that are easy to read, clear, and professional looking. Back in simpler times, stencils were used to create good looking playbooks. Today, it's not much different. When I create my playbook, the difficult task is to get it started, but once that happens, everything is smooth sailing from there. Why is the beginning difficult? I have to ask myself:

1) What do I want to put in?
2) How do I want to organize it?
3) How much is too much?
4) What defenses do I see most?
5) What are my blocking rules?

Among other things, answering these questions can take up time.

To start, I decided, I want to give an overview of my offense, I want to explain, what is it that my players are going to be looking at. I have a page that explains what we run and why we run it; then give an example of my most basic play versus air. I explain what each part of the play call does to affect the play we run.

- Pro Right 24 Counter … what does Pro mean? What does right mean? What does 20 mean? What does 4 mean? What does counter mean?

NEVER assume a player knows these things automatically. Great coaches will tell you, "It's not what we know, it's what our players know." Are you teaching your players everything they need to know? Understanding the basics of even the most trivial thing can help a player out. A big faux pas in assuming what a player knows was evident in a 1990 game between the 49ers and the Steelers. The 49ers kicker, Mike Cofer, kicked a high, short kick off. It landed just a few feet in front of Steelers player, Barry Foster. Foster treated it like a punt and never even moved towards the ball. The 49ers jumped on it and recovered it. When asked later about why he let the ball go, Foster replied, "I thought it was a dead ball." Never assume!

I place my basic philosophy: We define ourselves as … As what? A running team? A physical team? What do you want to define your team as?

The next page is the overview. Then I put my offensive goals. This could be per game or per season. I like doing this because I want the players to see what we want to accomplish. Have them think about what they want to do because football practice is not just running and drilling and hitting. These skills are going to help us achieve these goals. How do I expect my team to score 20+ points a game if we cannot last a quarter? How do I expect them to score 20+ points a game if we don't even know what a base block is? The players need to see the light at the end of the tunnel to understand where are everyday drills take us.

I follow that with cadence, audibles, and two-minute procedure. A proper cadence is essential to calling audibles. My QB and team need to know that if we go first sound, we cannot audible. They need to know that we will not audible after a certain point in our cadence. Therefore, we can expect after a certain point in our cadence that whatever is called is the play we are going to live and die with for the next six seconds, and therefore focus on execution.

I love to mention player skills in my playbook. Many times, a player has a delusion of grandeur. Your 5' 6" 200 lb kid is not going to be your safety if he has terrible footwork, if he runs a 5.6 second forty-yard-dash, or his shuttle time is over 5 seconds. This gives a coach a reliable source to tell the player that defensive back is not where he is going to find success and therefore must find another position, or work in the off season to meet those skills.

I define formations with suffixes. I might run one play out of a regular Pro I set, but if I know a defense has a tendency to blitz TE side, what will they do if I run the same play from Tight Pro? Do they do the same thing from a 2-TE set? For us, the adjustment is simple, even if we didn't practice the formation, we can still run it because we our kids know the play and the formation is just where we execute it from.

Next set are the plays. I like to break it down by series. It can be broken in numerical order or alphabetical order, which ever you believe is easiest; by series is just my preference. I like to show how one play compliments the other.

I have tried other programs before and there is always a learning curve. Word always allows to include my text into a document, editing is easy, and I know I can access my files from most computers. The draw functions are more than adequate to create your plays.
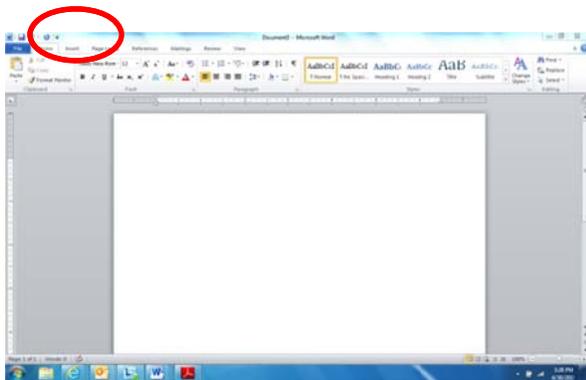
I will begin with drawing the offensive line.
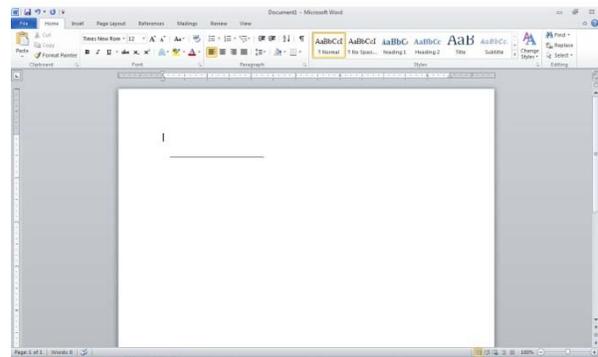

Figure 1

Figure 2

Select the insert tab on figure 1. Then select "SHAPES." Choose the line with no arrow head. Draw a horizontal line across the page. Take your time to determine and make sure the line is straight. Minimal errors on a screen can seem massive when you zoom in. The reason for this

line, is that this will give you both, flexibility to move splits and the ability to be precise when drawing in the offensive line.

Clicking on the inert tab again, select the circle shape. These will be your "O's" for offense. Next, select the "Text Box" option under the Insert menu. Sometimes it will give you a menu of what type of text box to use, I usually select the first option, "Simple Text Box." I use the text boxes to create the defense. I type in the position name. Right click on the text box frame and select "Format Shape." To right click, the cursor needs to be over the outline of the text box. Under the "Fill" option, I select "No Fill." I do this because when I move the text box close to an another object, I do not want the fill of the text box to cover another position or drawing I have made. Also, in the "Line Color" option, I select "No Line." This removes the outline of the box. The reason I use a text box instead of just typing in "DT" or "OLB" is because the text box is not locked in a line of the document. You have the freedom to adjust the defense toward the LOS or away from the LOS.

Once you have either side of the ball organized, I like to group the individual shapes. I group offense in three categories: Ends, Line, and Backs. To group a set of shapes, click on one shape, press the CTRL key on your keyboard and click on the other shapes that you want. Right click while the cursor is still on one of the shapes you have selected and select "Group." The purpose behind grouping is that if you decide to shift everything a few centimeters in one direction or another, you can shift the entire group of images versus moving each position over and over again.

To draw the individual blocking assignments, it helps in you zoom in. The zoom can be found in the bottom right hand corner. (Figure 3) I choose to zoom 500% because this allows me
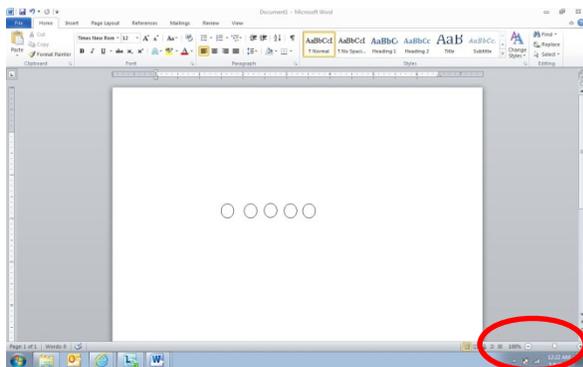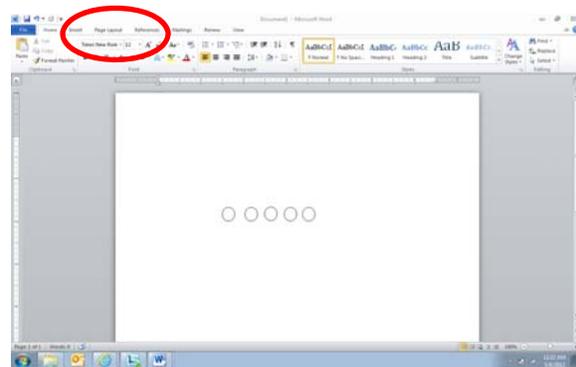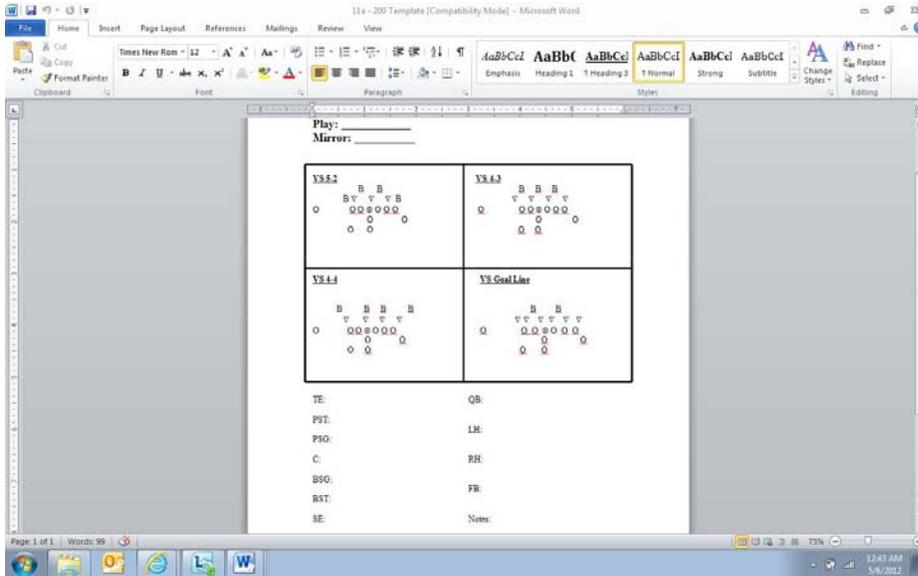

Figure 3

Figure 4

be more precise. Insert a new shape, and this time select the line. You can angle the lines as you see fit. Select the free style line if you want to free hand, or select the curved line to give your lines softer edges rather than sharp corners. Do not forget to group your lines on an individual block.

When I write my blocking rules, I type them out initially all the way down until I reach another page. Afterward, I highlight the entire paragraph and I select the page layout option. (Figure 4) I select the "Columns" option and select "Two Columns."

All this can be time consuming, so some time saving tips include: making a template page with a given formation without any lines for the play, copying and pasting the formation for the defenses you show and then adjusting the defense afterward, copying and pasting lines for a blocking assignment when there is a similar assignment, and especially SAVING FREQUENTLY. At the end, when you have your template, the process becomes easier. And you can have your template pages that look like:

eventually look like: