



How To Fit Football Products

Today's football padding helps protect you nearly from head to toe. Most of the gear is specifically designed to help maximize your performance while still helping to reduce the risk of injury.

How To Buy A Football Helmet

Determining Your Helmet Size

- Have someone help measure you with a measuring tape at 1" above the eyebrows to determine the size of your head.
- This sizing will correspond to the various sizes offered in helmet models.
- Helmet manufacturers strongly suggest you maintain a moderate to short hairstyle during the season. Severe changes in hair length often require a new fit.
- The front of the helmet should sit 1" above your eyebrow. This is the point at which the head was measured and is the point at which you can encompass the largest percentage of head mass.
- When pressing downward with the fingers interlocked on the top of the helmet, the pressure should be on the crown of the head and not on the brow.
- The chinstrap should be exactly centered and without slack to anchor your helmet properly.
- Keeping in mind that not all manufacturers size the same, you can use the chart below to determine your general helmet size.

Determining Your Helmet Size			
General Rule for Fitting Helmets			
Adult		Youth	
Helmet size	Head/Hat size	Helmet size	Head/Hat size
Small	6 1/8 - 6 3/4	X-Small	6 3/8 - 6 5/8
Medium	6 1/2 - 7	Small	6 5/8 - 6 7/8
Large	7 - 7 1/2	Medium	6 7/8 - 7 1/8
X-Large	7 1/4 - 7 1/2	Large	7 1/8 - 7 3/8
XX-Large	7 1/2 - 7 3/4	X-Large	7 3/8 - 7 1/2

Padding

- Helmets come with a series of pads, usually foam, that further cushion the head, jaw and nose.
- These pads usually come standard with any helmet that you buy.
- Replacement pads, liner padding systems and liners are also offered.
- Pads may be designed specifically for your helmet model.
- Pads include front and back sizes to adjust the helmet's fit.
- Pads for the top, side and back of the helmet and jaw pads also are part of the padding system.
- Manufacturers offer these pads in different thickness, ranging from 1/2 to 1 inch, to allow you to select the firmness that you prefer.
- Upgrade to Air Systems padding for even more protection.
 - Air systems withstand repeated blows better than helmets that use just foam pads.
 - In addition, air systems are generally more comfortable and provide for an easy fit since air can be adjusted to tighten the helmet to your head's specific shape.

Face Masks

- Helmets come in two basic styles: with and without the mask.
- There is an array of face masks offered, each designed to protect various parts of the face and to optimize protection for different players while still allowing them the best visibility to play their position.
- Manufacturers often use letters to designate a facemask's protection design.
 - OPO--Oral Protection Only
 - JOP--Jaw and Oral Protection
 - NOPO--Nose and Oral Protection Only
 - NJOP--Nose, Jaw and Oral Protection
 - EGOP--Eye Glass and Oral Protection

Styles

There are many styles of facemasks as well to help you maximize needed protection while still being able to play your position. These differences are usually indicated by an abbreviation:

- R: Reinforced
 - Refers to the reinforced bar at the top of the facemask.
 - This strengthens the facemask and minimizes the chance of vertical spreading.
- DW: Double Wire Configuration
 - This adds stability and strength.
 - It also decreases the opening in the facemask so hands, fingers and feet are less likely to strike your face.
 - This design minimizes the chance of horizontal spreading, important for linemen or for other positions where you either block or tackle and end up in the pile.
- SW: Single Wire Configuration
 - This eliminates a bar running in the "east-west" direction.
 - This design will suit you if you play a position where visibility is critical.
- UB: U-Bar Attached
 - This often times is called a bull ring.
 - As with a Double Wire design, the U-Bar also is designed to minimize fingers, hands or feet from striking your nose.
- SK: Skill Position Players
 - Designed for skill position players since the side bar is angled back for better peripheral vision.
 - It's also slightly longer.

Sizes

- Sizes typically run youth, regular and extra-large to correspond to each manufacturer's sizing system.
- Youth model facemasks should fit all sizes of youth helmets.
- Regular size facemasks should fit small, medium and larger shell sizes of adult/varsity helmet models.
- X-large facemasks fit the same size shell as regular size facemasks and can also be used on large sizes when a player may need the extra protection.

Chin Straps

- Chinstraps perform two functions.
- First, they protect the chin area, with a cup that fits snugly underneath and around the chin.
- Second, the straps snap onto your helmet to hold it firmly on your head. That's why it's crucial to keep it centered and without slack.
- Helmets come with standard chinstraps, but you can buy different styles and replacement straps.

NOCSAE

- NOCSAE stands for the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, a voluntary organization that has developed standards for a variety of sports protective equipment.
- Any helmet that bears the NOCSAE seal shows the manufacturer has met the standards at the time the helmet was manufactured.

How To Buy Football Pads

Shoulder Pads

- Shoulder pads are designed to help you accomplish your job based on your position.
- Manufacturers do a good job of identifying which pad works best for what positions.
- Pads also come in youth and adult sizes so please review the sizing instructions and chart below to help in your selection.

By Position

- Quarterback
 - Look for lightweight pads that won't ride up high to limit your head movement or field of vision.
 - If your team uses the option and you are part of the running game, you should consider a shoulder pad made for running backs or defensive backs. These pads offer more protection for quarterbacks that are part of the team's running offense.
- Skill positions
 - If you play defensive back, tailback, wide receiver *or* option quarterback, you want a pad that's lightweight and won't slow you down, while still absorbing the hits that you will take.
 - These pads also are designed to provide flexibility and unrestricted movement.
- Bigger skill positions
 - Fullbacks, linebackers and tight-ends should consider pads that use a plated front rather than laces.
 - Plated fronts do not require as much adjustment after each hit.
 - Some pads also come with vinyl buckles instead of elasticized straps to more securely fasten the pad under the arm.
- Linemen
 - If you play in the trenches, you need a streamlined pad that uses fewer flaps and epaulets (the flaps that extend over the shoulder area) to prevent other players from grabbing and pulling on your pads.
 - Linemen pads often use vinyl buckles to keep them more securely fastened.
 - As for elastic straps vs. vinyl buckles, consider that elastic needs to be adjusted and replaced after heavy usage. However, elastic may be preferred since it expands and contracts more easily than vinyl buckles when you breathe.
- Kicking game
 - Most punters and place kickers use quarterback pads since these are lighter and offer better movement.

Determining the Proper Size Shoulder Pads

- To determine the size pad that best suits you, stand up straight with your arms at your side.
- Measure across your back from where you feel the shoulder bone on one side to where the bone extends on the opposite side.
- Round up to the next half-inch and refer to the chart below.
- For youth pads you will also need to factor in chest size and weight.

Determining The Proper Youth Shoulder Pad Size			
Size	Back measurement	Chest size	Weight
2X small	11" - 12"	24 - 26	40 - 60
X small	12" - 13"	26 - 28	50 - 70
Small	13" - 14"	28 - 30	60 - 80
Medium	14" - 15"	30 - 32	70 - 100
Large	15" - 16"	32 - 34	90 - 120
X large	16" - 17"	34 - 36	110 - 140

Determining The Proper Adult Shoulder Pad Size	
Size	Back measurement
Medium	17" - 18"
Large	18" - 19"
X large	19" - 20"
2X large	20" - 21"
3X large	21" - 22"
4X large	22" - 23"
5X large	24" +

Other Football Pads

You can further protect yourself with a variety of padding; some designed more for specific positions and some to help injured players to protect sensitive areas.

Collar Pads/Neck Rolls

- These attach to the back of shoulder pads to further protect the collarbone.
- Manufacturers make specific models to fit their pads and offer both youth and adult sizes.
- You can also purchase a back plate for added protection to the back area and a sternum plate to further protect this area.

Rib Vests

- Several styles of rib protection are offered, a good option for players with sore ribs or who take constant pounding from tackles.
- Many shoulder pad manufacturers sell a rib protector that extends from the bottom of their pads. For these you buy the size that corresponds to your shoulder pad size as specified by the manufacturer.
- Also available are vests that use hook-and-loop closures to secure the vest, which has padding built-in to the vest to protect your ribs.
- Vests are fitted by chest size, according to each maker's specifications.
- Some models come with suspenders that then have rib protection padding at the bottom
- Rib pads can be attached to shoulder pads or worn separately with suspenders.

Forearm Pads

- A variety of pads are offered to protect the hands and arms of players, usually offensive and defensive linemen who use their arms to block and tackle.
- These pads can provide crucial protection from your fingertips to just past your elbows.

Gloves

- Different positions require different types of gloves.
- Lineman should look for gloves that are heavily padded on the top of the hand and wrist.
- Receivers and running backs, as well as defensive backs, should purchase flexible, soft gloves that have some tackiness to them.

Hip and Tailbone Pads

- Hip pads are a must for nearly every player, but certainly those who take punishment from tackles such as running backs, receivers and quarterbacks.
- Tailbone pads help protect the sensitive tailbone area of running backs and receivers, who often get hit here.
- Since these often extend outside the pant, you can buy them in colors to closely match your team's uniform colors.
- Hip and tail pads are usually sold as three-piece sets.
- Football pants do not have pockets for hip and tail pads, so you will have to purchase a girdle as well

Thigh Pads

- Thigh pads give better protection to players who are often tackled.
- These slide into pockets in the football pants.
- Thigh pads can be made of either foam, which is lightweight and molds to the body well, or vinyl dipped, which is thick and offers better protection.

Knee Pads

- All players benefit from kneepads, generally foam-encased, soft pads that slide into the pockets on most football pants.
- Kneepads can be made of either foam, which is lightweight and molds to the body well, or vinyl dipped, which is thick and offers better protection.

Pad Sets

- Many manufacturers offer protection systems, complete with hip, tail, thigh, and kneepads. These sets generally will save you money vs. buying the pads individually.
- 7-piece sets generally include two hip pads, one tail pad, two thigh pads, and two kneepads.
- 3-piece sets generally include two hip pads and one tail pad combination.