

# Top 10 Key Points of Quarterback Mechanics

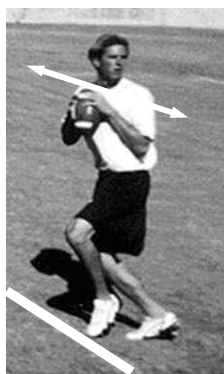
by Ron Jenkins, M.S., M.A. • [www.TopGunQBAcademy.com](http://www.TopGunQBAcademy.com)

## 1 - Ball Carriage



Holding the ball correctly on the dropback helps keep the movement smooth and efficient and will actually improve the rotation of the football. Here, Carson Palmer does a great job of carrying the ball in a relaxed and efficient manner.

## 2 - Shoulders on Dropback



The shoulders should be slightly open to the field with the facemask down the middle of the field. This allows the quarterback full vision of the field and does not allow the defense to see where he is going with the football.

## 3 - Plant-foot



The back (plant-foot) should be perpendicular to the target area just as the quarterback is stepping into the throw. This greatly increases the accuracy of the throw.

## 4 - Forward Shoulder



The forward shoulder should be pointed at the target area just before the quarterback steps into the throw. By waiting until the throw, the QB will hold the defense and not allow them to read where the ball is going. Pointing the front shoulder to the target area increases the accuracy of the throw.

## 5 - Target-step



The target step should be short and across an imaginary line just to the inside of the plant-step. This shorter step will keep the throwing motion quick, compact, and allow the athlete to use more of his legs and shoulders during the throwing motion, thereby increasing the accuracy and velocity of the trajectory.

## 6 - Throwing Elbow



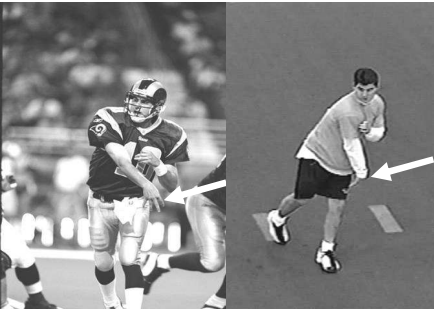
During the throwing motion, keep the throwing elbow at, or above the throwing shoulder.

## 7 - Vertical Head



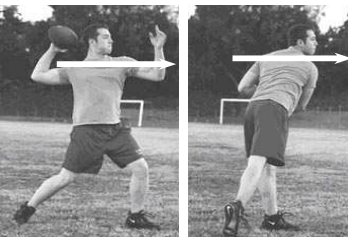
The head should be kept as vertical as possible throughout all throws.

## 8 - Throwing Hand



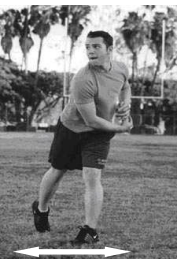
The throwing hand should pronate (palm down) during the end of the motion, and should end up at the opposite front pocket area. This is Marc Bolger of the N.F.L.'s St. Louis Rams. Marc also does a great job of using the shoulder-spin to get more rotation and velocity on the ball (*see-below*).

## 9 - Throwing Shoulder



The throwing shoulder should end up pointing at the target area after the throw (*shoulder-spin*). This produces results immediately, and increases the rotation of the football.

## 10 - Trail Foot

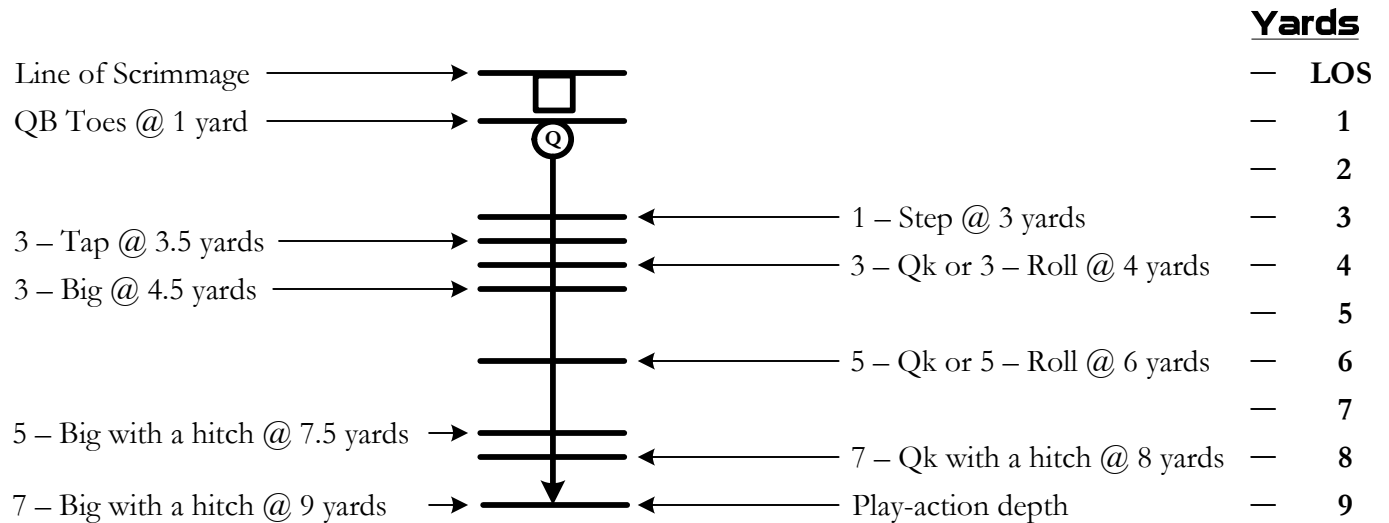


The trail foot should stay close to the ground throughout the throw, and end up even with the target step after the throw.

# Calibrating the Drop

## Drop Depth and Foot-action from Center

The quarterback's drop needs to time out so that the football can be released before the receiver makes his break. The quarterback needs to base his drop on who he is throwing the football to.



### Drops and Routes

DROP TYPE	DEPTH FROM LOS	ROUTE EXAMPLE
1 - step	3 yards	Bubble screen
1 - step	3 yards	≤ 5 yard goal line Fade
3 - tap	3.5 yards	Quick Flat
3 - tap	3.5 yards	Quick Slant (dbl. slant)
3 - quick	4 yards	Quick Hitch, Slant - Flat Key
3 - roll	4 yards	Quick Speed-out by WR
3 - big, (hold)	4.5 yards	Stick
5 - quick	6 yards	Spot & Quick Switch Routes
5 - roll	6 yards	Speed-out by WR
5 - hitch	7 yards	Curls
5 - big, hitch	7.5 yards	7 - step comeback by WR
7 - quick	8 yards	Drags, Smashes
7 - quick, hitch	8 yards	Digs, Square-ins & Switch Routes
7 - big hitch	9 yards	Post-corner routes by WR
Sprint action	5 yard minimum	Sprint Right Option
Play action	9 yards	Add 5 yards to normal route depth

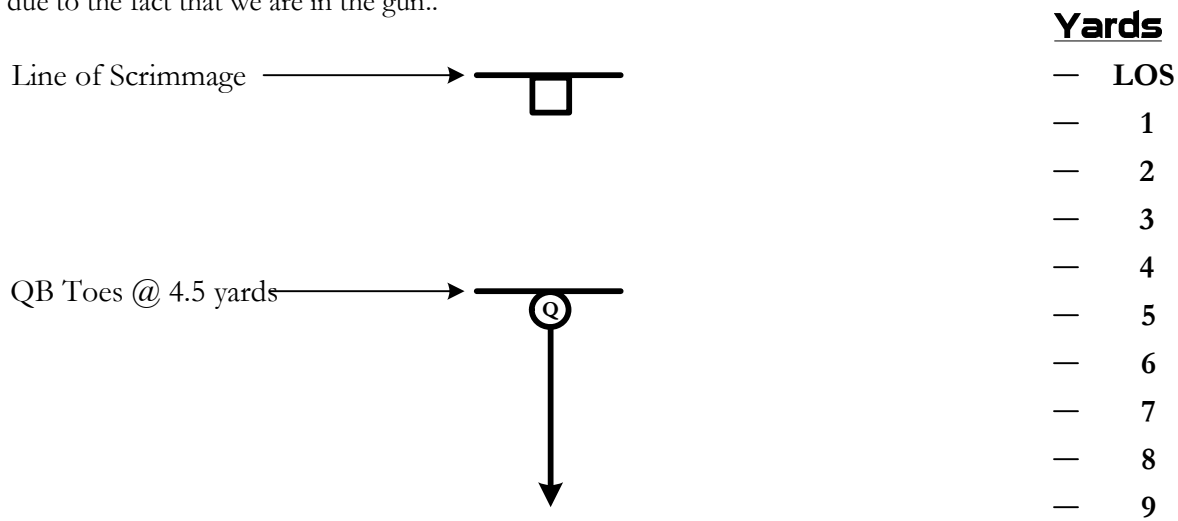
# Calibrating the Drop

## Foot-action from The Gun

Throwing from the gun presents a problem for quarterbacks who are used to the rhythm that throwing using normal drops provides. This is primarily because they are not used to waiting for receivers to get open. In other words, from the gun the quarterback is usually ready to throw before he is suppose to, which in turn takes him out of his rhythm.

I have developed a way for the “Gun QB” to get the ball to the receiver at exactly the same time he would normally do using a traditional drop. The key in this technique is to catch the football, then begin the drop exactly as he would from center. He will catch the ball, take his punch step, and proceed with the drop. We can also throw the ball on-time throwing the quick-passing game from the “shot-gun”.

The basic premise is “minus two-steps” for every “under-center drop” For example, a normal 5 – step drop will be Catch, punch-step and then 3 – step drop from the gun. Now, because we are in the gun, we will not worry about depth. We will focus on timing, so we are more concerned with the steps we take than the depth of the drop, because we already have depth due to the fact that we are in the gun..



### Drops and Routes

DROP TYPE	TURNS INTO	ROUTE EXAMPLE
1 – step	Must be under center	Bubble screen
1 – step	Must be under center	≤ 5 yard goal line Fade
3 – tap	Catch, punch-step, throw	Quick Flat
3 – tap	Catch, punch-step, throw	Quick Slant (dbl. slant)
3 – quick	Catch, punch-step, throw	Quick Hitch, Slant – Flat Key
3 – roll	Catch, punch-step, throw	Quick Speed-out by WR
3 – big, (hold)	Catch, punch-step, hold, throw	Stick
5 – quick	Catch, punch-step, 3 – quick	Spot
5 – roll	Catch, punch-step, 3 – roll	Speed-out by WR
5 – hitch	Catch, punch-step, 3 – hitch	Curls, corners by inside rec.
5 – big, hitch	Catch, punch-step, 3 – big, hitch	7 – step comeback by WR
7 – quick	Catch, punch-step, 5 – quick	Drags, Smashes
7 – quick, hitch	Catch, punch-step, 5 – quick, hitch	Digs, square-ins
7 – big, hitch	Catch, punch-step, 5 – big, hitch	Post-corners by the WR
Sprint action	9 yards minimum	Sprint Option
Play action	9 yards minimum	Add 5 yards to normal route depth



# **QUARTERBACK CHECKLIST ESSENTIALS**

## **PHASE I – FOOTWORK**

- Polymeric Stretch Routine**  
Stretch core for flexibility, stability and strength
- Form Running**  
High knees prevents being tackled from behind
- Reach Stride**  
Teach open shoulders, proper foot placement
- Ball Carriage**  
For balance and good visual stability during drops – Improves accuracy and allows for quicker release
- Shot-gun Quick-throw Mechanics**  
Catch, punch-step, plant and throw – great technique in order to throw quick-passes from the gun
- Receiving Snap from Center**  
Hand placement – nudge upward – ride center – punch-step versus staggered-step
- Hurdle Footwork**  
Balance – quick feet – teach proper technique to hitch up in pocket – balanced ball carriage for centered gravity – front hand pressure – relaxed shoulders – working back and forward in a straight line
- Drop to Depth**  
Get proper depth in a straight line with balance – teach good ball carriage – learn balance throughout drop for better passing and better accuracy

## **PHASE II – THROWING MECHANICS**

- Wrist Throw**  
Teach snapping of wrist – improved ball rotation – helps the point of ball turn upwards – better flight of football
- Dart Throw**  
Better control of wrist which leads to a lighter grip and better spiral of football
- Quick Release Throw**  
Helps develop a quicker, more compact throwing motion – creates the ability to get rid of the football more quickly and efficiently
- Line Throw with Shoulder Spin**  
Develop a shorter stride for more velocity and more compact throwing motion with better use of the whole body for the throw – Shoulder spin creates increased rotation of the football, increased velocity and better accuracy and control of the pass – elbow should be at or above shoulder when passing – keep trail leg close to the ground – keep eye on target throughout the throw until the ball is caught
- Release Over Front Foot**  
Teaches high release – better use of legs and body to create velocity – squares hips on throws
- Quick Passing Footwork**  
Short 3<sup>rd</sup> step – prevent over striding – plant-step perpendicular to target – short step across midline – work with shoulder-spin for velocity and accuracy
- Bubble-screen Footwork**  
1<sup>st</sup> step at 6-O’Clock – 1-second time-limit

### PHASE III – DROPBACK PASSING

- Hitch Progression**  
Balanced throughout – wait until plant-step to declare target area – Hitch – last crossover – hitch, backside – hitch, front side targets – Let feet tell you when to go from 1 to 2 to outlet
- Quick Feet, Turn Swing**  
Give it to hot back right now
- Reset, Pop Feet, Hit Swing**  
Be able to throw the swing route accurately to the back
- Different types of throws**  
1, 2, 3, 4, and 5
- Screen Drops & Throws**  
Bait and throw accurately and safely
- Deep Throws 2.5 Seconds**  
Tilt shoulders – short stride across midline – focus on target, not on football
- Hot Throws Off Back Foot**  
Accurately and safely with firm pass and great rotation on football

#### **QUARTERBACK DROPS & DISTANCES (MEASURED FROM LINE OF SCRIMMAGE) ANTICIPATE THE RECEIVER GETTING OPEN – THROW TO SPOTS – DON'T WAIT!**

- One-step:** Get 1<sup>st</sup> step at 6-o'clock  
Bubble screens (Wide routes), and quick swing routes. Also, fade routes from the five-yard line.
- Three-tap:** No cross-over  
Double slant routes, quick flat routes
- Three-quick:** Timing is more important than depth  
HOT routes, hitch routes, slant routes, and Red Zone fade routes.
- Three-roll:** The QB drops back about **4 yards**.  
Quick-out routes run by the outside receiver.
- Three-big:** The QB drops back about **4 1/2 yards**.  
Flat - Slant route combinations.
- Three-big, hold:** The QB drops back about **4 1/2 yards**.  
Stick routes, some slant routes and open-field fade routes.
- Five-quick, hitch:** The QB drops about **6 yards**.  
Go-routes, skinny posts, spot-routes, stab-routes, and flat routes.
- Five-roll:** The QB drops about **6 yards**.  
Twelve-yard speed-outs run by the outside receiver.
- Five-big:** The QB drops about **7 yards**.  
Swing routes, inside corner routes, and drag routes.
- Five-big, hitch:** The QB drops about **7 – 7 1/2 yards**.  
Curl routes and 14-yard comeback routes
- Seven-quick, hitch:** The QB drops about **8 yards**.  
Dig routes, square-in routes, drag routes, smash routes, and corner routes inside the Red Zone.
- Seven-big with a hitch-step:** The QB drops **9 yards**.  
Counter routes, post-corners and 18-yard comeback routes run by the outside receiver.

## PHASE IV – ACTION MECHANICS

### Proper Handoff Technique

- Deal ball from beltline – always follow through and FINISH!**
- A Fake – Show ball**  
FOX 2 & 3 Open to hole – Suck defenders up
- B Fake – Show ball**  
ZEBRA 6 & 7 SNAKE 6 & 7 – Move defense horizontally and up
- C Fake – Flash ball**  
FLASH 3 & 4 – Hold defender still for split second
- D Fake Back to defense – show ball 1<sup>st</sup> then just give a quick hand fake!**  
COUGAR 4 & 5 Move defenders vertically and horizontally
- Hound Fake – Back to Defense**  
HOUND 2 & 3 Reverse to hole and give hand fake keeping your back to the defense for as long as possible

## PHASE V – THROWING ON THE RUN

- Walk at Target**  
Teaches foot / throw coordination –
- Jog at Target**  
Stand up – shorten stride – breath out – and follow through
- Quick Flat Throw**  
1<sup>st</sup> step at 6 o'clock
- Medium Distance Throws**  
Long step into throw to generate power and balance
- Deep Throws**  
Crow's hop

## PHASE VI – SHOTGUN MECHANICS

- 3-step Quick Game**  
Catch, punch, step and throw
- 5-step**  
Catch, punch 3-step (hitch) and throw
- 7-step**  
Catch, punch 5-step, hitch and throw

## PHASE VII – CONTINGENCY PLANNING

- Contingency Pattern of Receivers**  
Deep, comeback & horizontal
- Route of Quarterback Release**  
Gain depth before turning up – also see “throwing on the run”
- Pump Fake as a Signal**  
When and why

## PHASE VIII – MENTAL PROCESS – READS & PROGRESSIONS

### □ THINKING PROCESS

#### FIVE SPECIFIC MENTAL STEPS DURING A SINGLE PLAY

- 1 – After a play, what went right and wrong – what could you do better – think current down & distance and be objective – then forget the previous play.
- 2 – Next, as the play-call comes into you (either by signal, messenger, or verbally from the coach), your focus becomes locked on getting the play and the snap count to your team in an efficient manner.
- 3 – Next, analyze the playcall, realizing how your offense will execute the play, what your specific responsibilities are (throw, play-fake, run), and you are communicating the play call and the snap count to your team in the huddle.
- 4 – Once the huddle breaks, go through your procedures for run, do you need to opposite the play? (See below for passing situations).
- 5 – The final and most important mental task you will perform in this sequence is to put your mind into automatic processing (reacting – and letting all of your practice, preparation, talent, and skill take over. ***This is what all the most successful quarterbacks can do on a regular basis, and what holds most quarterbacks from playing to their potential.*** Thinking is replaced by ***automatically reacting*** to what you see and what the situation dictates – allowing you to be in the zone.

### □ PROCEDURE

1. IN YOUR MIND, SEE WHERE ALL YOUR RECEIVERS ARE RUNNING THEIR ROUTES AND THEIR RECEPTION POINTS,
2. FIND THE SAFETIES,
3. LOCATE POTENTIAL BLITZERS,
4. LOCATE YOUR HOT ROUTES
5. START ELIMINATING RECEIVERS
6. NARROW YOUR CHOICE OF RECEIVERS TO TWO AND THEN FIND YOUR KEY

### □ BASIC READS

- DRAG
- SLANT
- STICK
- CURL
- SIDELINE
- DEEP OUT
- DIG
- SQUARE-IN
- DEEP
- 4-VERTICALS



## CHEAT SHEET FOR RECOGNIZING COVERAGES

Get to the line of scrimmage with 18-seconds left on the clock  
With less than 10-seconds, all called shifts and motions are off

### The Center will make the following calls

Odd – Center covered or shaded  
Even – linebacker covering center  
Clear – There is no one over the center  
Solid – Center and both guards are covered

### **THERE ARE FOUR BASIC TYPES OF ZONE COVERAGE**

Three-deep coverage  
Two-deep coverage  
Quarters coverage  
Rotation coverage

### COVER THREE ZONE

#### **THREE-DEEP – FOUR-UNDERNEATH COVERAGE**

#### **GREAT FOR COMPLETING BALL-CONTROL PASSES**

**Free safety:** 12-yards deep he can get as far as 2-yards outside the hash mark for disguise – any further than that and he won't be able to get back – at the snap of the ball, he will fly back to the middle of the coverage (triangle with the two widest receivers).

**Strong safety:** Lined up outside the tight end at 5 x 5 (or outside the TE) looking into the backfield. He has the flat coverage on the strongside, and the **Will Backer** has the flat coverage to the weakside.

### COVER TWO ZONE

#### **Two-deep – five-underneath coverage**

- Reading Free-safeties
- Check their Depth
- Check their Hash mark relation
- Look strong safety alignment and position – this determines man or zone
- Free safety depth – if he's at 12-plus he is a deep back.
- If he's at 10-minus, be alert for blitz

“**Open**” – there is NO defender in the deep middle of the field

“**Closed**” – there is a defender in the deep middle of the field

**Free safety:** 12-yards deep and on the hash mark (or within three yards outside of the hash mark).

**Strong safety:** 12-yards deep and on the hash mark (or within three yards outside of the hash mark).

- Four defenders in the secondary means you DON'T have eight in the box
- Two safeties will be deep and usually more than 11-plus yards from the line of scrimmage
- At the snap of the ball, they will immediately move backward
- The corners will usually be outside the #1 receiver at about 4 to 6-yards deep looking into the backfield
- Rotation means a secondary man lines up deep but ends up playing an underneath coverage
- When a safety gains width, the corner on that side now takes the flat

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### **NOTE: COVER TWO READ ZONE**

- Two safeties will be deep and usually more than 11-plus yards from the line of scrimmage
- At the snap of the ball, they will immediately move backward
- The corners will read the #2 receiver; if he goes to the flat area, the corner will stay in the flat area.
- If the corner's flat area is not threatened, the corner will drop deep – they will not cover space without a receiver threatening that space
  - This may look like cover 4 (each defensive back covering 25% of the field deep)

### **NOTE: HARD COVER TWO ZONE**

- Two safeties will be deep and usually more than 11-plus yards from the line of scrimmage
- At the snap of the ball, they will immediately move backward
- As the receivers pass the cornerbacks, the corner backs will either try to funnel them into the middle of the field, or force them out of into the sideline
  - The corners will then sit at about 9 to 12 yards off the line of scrimmage to the outside

### **QUARTERS COVERAGE**

- Two safeties will be deep and usually less than 11 yards from the line of scrimmage
- At the snap of the ball they will be hang almost flat-footed (they will not drop back deep)
  - The safeties will read the number two receiver – if he goes vertical, the safety is responsible for covering him – if #2 goes flat or drags, the safety will double the # 1 receiver along with the corner
- The safeties are responsible for the run first – that is to say that they will come up hard on all runs and / or play action passes

### **COVER ONE-FREE**

**Free Safety:** 12-yards depth

**Strong Safety:** Inside the number 2 receiver looking at him rather than looking in the backfield  
Confirm coverage by looking at the corners – they should be looking at the receivers and not looking in the backfield.

**Blitz:** Look for a 5-6 man rush. Someone is coming on a blitz.

### **COVER ZERO**

No safeties in the middle of the field!

The safeties will be within 10-yards of the line of scrimmage

The safeties will either come on a blitz, or will be covering a receiver because the linebacker(s) or a corner is coming on the blitz.

**Blitz:** Expect a minimum of a seven-man rush.

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