

Fourth Down Decisions

Read the football article, then answer. Some answers are right in the text. Others need a smart inference backed by evidence. Made-up teams only.

Name _____

Date _____

READING TOOLKIT

Literal

find it right
in the text

Infer

use clues +
what you know

Vocab

word meaning
from context

Evidence

quote the line
that proves it

DOWN TO GO BALL ON

4 2 GF 30

READ • THINK • DECIDE

READ THE ARTICLE

Fourth and Two

- The Lakeview Lynx faced **fourth down and 2** at the Granite Falls 30-yard line. Seven minutes were left in the game. The Lynx trailed the Grizzlies **17-13**. Every fan in the stands had an opinion. So did Coach Dana Reyes.
- On fourth down, a team has three main choices. It can **punt**. That gives the ball away, but it pushes the other team back and wins **field position**. It can kick a **field goal** for 3 points. Or it can **go for it** and try to gain the 2 yards. If that play comes up short, the other team takes over right where the ball is.
- Coach Reyes checked a card from team **analyst** Sam Okafor. This season, the Lynx had **converted** 15 of their 25 tries on fourth-and-2. Their kicker had made 7 of 10 field goals from this distance. "A field goal still leaves us behind by one," Okafor said. "We need a touchdown at some point."
- Some fans call going for it **aggressive** and kicking **conservative**. Okafor uses different words. "It is not about being brave," she said. "It is about which choice gives us the best chance to win."
- Reyes kept the offense on the field. Running back Jalen Ruiz took the handoff and slipped through a gap for 3 yards. First down! Four plays later, quarterback Tariq Bell threw a 9-yard touchdown pass. After the extra point, the Lynx led **20-17**.
- After the game, a reporter asked Reyes if she was nervous. "Sure," she said. "But we did our homework. A good decision can still fail, and a bad one can still work. We judge the choice, not just the result."

ROOKIE

- What was the score when the Lynx faced fourth down? Write it as **Lynx-Grizzlies**.

WORK SPACE

_____ - _____

ROOKIE

- Name the **three main choices** a team has on fourth down.

STARTER

- What happens if a team goes for it and **comes up short**?

STARTER

- Why did Okafor say a field goal was **not enough**? Use one detail from the article.

PRO

- In paragraph 3, what does the word **converted** mean?

PRO

- How is Okafor's way of judging the choice **different** from the fans' way?

ALL-STAR

- How many points did the Lynx score on the drive **after** the fourth-down play?

WORK SPACE

_____ points

CHALLENGE ★

- What does Reyes mean by "We judge the **choice**, not just the **result**"? Explain in your own words.

A Fourth-Down Data Card

The Lynx's fourth-down tries this season, sorted by how many yards they needed.

DISTANCE	TRIES	CONVERTED	RATE %
4th & 1	20	15	
4th & 2	25	15	
4th & 3	16	8	
4th & 4-5	12	4	
4th & 6+	10	2	

Made-up Lakeview Lynx data. A try counts as converted when the team gains the yards for a first down.

1 Fill in the **Rate %** for each row. Round to **1 decimal place**.

2 What happens to the rate as the **yards to go** go up?

3 What was the Lynx's rate on **all tries combined**? Round to **1 decimal place**.

4 At their fourth-and-2 rate, how many of their **next 10** fourth-and-2 tries should the Lynx expect to convert?

B Word Work

Write the word from the bank that matches each meaning. Use the article for clues. One word is not used.

Word bank: aggressive · analyst · conservative · conversion · field position

1 a person who studies data to help a team decide

2 careful; picking the safer choice

3 a successful try to gain the yards needed

4 where on the field a team starts with the ball

C Make the Call

Expected points is the average number of points a choice earns per try. This simple model skips what happens after a miss.

1 The kicker made **7 of 10** field goals from this distance. What are the expected points for a field goal try? Write a decimal.

WORK SPACE

_____ points

2 Use your **fourth-and-2 rate** from Part A. After a conversion, they score a touchdown on **2 of every 3** drives. What percent of the time does going for it end in a touchdown? Round to the **nearest whole percent**.

WORK SPACE

_____ %

3 A touchdown plus the extra point is worth **7 points**. What are the expected points for going for it? Write a decimal.

WORK SPACE

_____ points

4 Which choice has **higher** expected points? By how many points? Write a decimal.

WORK SPACE

_____ by _____

BONUS · YOUR TURN

Would you have gone for it? Write **two or three sentences**. Use one number from this sheet and one detail from the article.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Answer Key (for teachers & parents)

Answers for **Fourth Down Decisions**, with the work shown and sample wording where answers may vary. Print pages 1 and 2 for students, and keep this page for checking. Accept any reading answer that matches the article.

Page 1 Problems

- 13-17** (Lynx behind by 4)
- Punt, kick a field goal, or go for it**
- The other team gets the ball** right where it is (paragraph 2)
- It still leaves the Lynx behind** ($13+3 = 16$, still 1 short of 17); they need a touchdown
- Succeeded / gained the yards for a first down**
- Okafor judges by the best chance to win**, not by whether it looks brave or careful
- 7 points** (touchdown 6 + extra point 1; $13 \rightarrow 20$)
- Answers vary.** A choice can be smart even if it fails; judge the plan by the odds, not luck.

A · Fourth-Down Data Card

- 75.0% · 60.0% · 50.0% · 33.3% · 20.0%**
- The rate goes down** as yards to go go up
- 53.0%** ($44 \div 83$, not the average of the rates)
- 6 tries** (60% of 10)

B · Word Work

- analyst**
- conservative**
- conversion**
- field position**

Not used: aggressive

C · Make the Call

- 2.1 points** (0.7×3)
- 40%** (A1 rate 60% $\rightarrow 0.6 \times 2/3 = 0.4$)
- 2.8 points** (0.4×7 , using C2)
- Going for it, by 0.7 points** ($2.8 - 2.1$)

Quick score

Page 1 problems	_____ / 8
A · Data Card	_____ / 4
B · Word Work	_____ / 4
C · Make the Call	_____ / 4
Total	_____ / 20

Skills practiced

Reading comprehension Inference Context vocabulary Text evidence
Percents Probability Expected value

Teaching tip: In A3, many students average the five rates and get 47.7%. The real combined rate is total converted $\div$ total tries ($44/83 = 53.0\%$). **Section C hint:** expected points = chance of success (as a decimal) $\times$ points. For the bonus, push for one number *and* one quote. That is how analysts argue.