

FOOTBALL RULES

*Simplified
Laws of the Game*

ABOUT THESE RULES

Football, the world's most popular sport, has one of sport's smallest Law/rule books. However, like any rule book, The IFAB's official 'Laws of the Game' is very detailed and uses technical and sometimes complex language.

Consequently, many people who watch, play, coach, referee or report on the game have asked for a simpler version which gives a shorter but clear overall picture. Therefore, we created "Football Rules", a reduced version of the official Laws of the Game. Whilst the Laws are mainly intended for referees, the Football Rules use simpler language and a different structure, to make the Laws easier to understand for everyone. Each Rule has a link to the corresponding sections in the Laws of the Game for those who want more information or the official wording.

The term "rules" and the other terms used in this version (e.g. 'pitch' instead of 'field of play', penalty 'spot' instead of penalty 'mark' or 'penalties' instead of 'kicks from the penalty mark') were chosen to reflect widely used words and terms.

There is a simpler structure with a focus on 'what should happen?' and 'what happens if...' something occurs which is not expected or allowed. One of football's key attractions is its simplicity. Hopefully, these "Football Rules" will provide an easier understanding and appreciation of the Laws for everyone, and will enhance the game's attractiveness for participants and spectators, wherever they are in the world, and at whatever level of the game.

If you have any questions, they can be sent to: lawenquiries@theifab.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Daniel Bennett, Alex Feuerherdt, Duane Dell'Oca & Maciej Leśnik for their detailed contributions and assistance in helping ensure that these "Football Rules" reflect the needs of all football stakeholders who are interested in gaining a clearer understanding of the Laws of the Game.

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ADVANTAGE

DEFINITION

Advantage is when an offence (foul, handball, offside, technical, etc.) occurs and, because the non-offending team has useful possession of the ball, the referee allows play to continue, as it is to their benefit.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The referee signals advantage by extending one or both arms forward at shoulder height.

The referee should only play advantage if:

- there is a real benefit for the non-offending team
- no player is seriously injured
- there is no risk of a reaction or confrontation

Unless there is a clear goal-scoring opportunity for the non-offending team, the referee should not play advantage following red-card offences, particularly:

- serious foul play
- violent conduct
- offences requiring a second yellow card

The referee must make a quick, tactical decision and should remember that:

- allowing play to continue is not always in the best interests of the non-offending team, e.g. if they are in or near their own penalty area and/or under pressure
- a free kick in an attacking situation may be better for the non-offending team than allowing play to continue

The referee can wait a few seconds to allow a possible advantage to develop, and if the non-offending team does not benefit and gains no advantage, the original free kick can be given. However, the non-offending team should not be given two chances, e.g. a player is fouled but recovers and has a shot at goal; if the player does not score, the referee cannot go back and give a free kick for the original offence.

If the referee plays advantage following an offence that would have resulted in a red or yellow card being shown, the card must be shown next time the game stops. However:

- if the offence was denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, a yellow card is shown instead of a red card as playing advantage allowed the attack to continue
- if the offence was stopping a promising attack, no card is shown as playing advantage allowed the attack to continue

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a defender starts fouling (e.g. holding) an opponent outside the penalty area and the foul continues into the penalty area?

The referee plays advantage for the offence outside the area and awards a penalty kick.

a defender starts fouling (e.g. holding) an opponent inside the penalty area and the foul continues outside the penalty area?

The referee awards a penalty kick (no advantage is played).

continued

ADVANTAGE

an advantage is played and the player who should have been shown a red card (including a second yellow card) then gets involved in the game?

The referee stops play, sends off the player in question and awards an indirect free kick to the opponents.

For further information, click [here](#).

ARGUING / DISSENT, PROTESTS, COMPLAINTS

DEFINITION

Arguing, complaining or protesting about a decision is known in the Laws as dissent. It can be verbal (with words) or physical (e.g. running at the referee, making gestures, kicking or throwing the ball away).

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Players, substitutes, coaches and other team officials should respect the decisions of the referee and the other match officials.

An initial, non-exaggerated disagreement, objection or complaint is usually accepted by the referee as a natural reaction.

Clear and/or continual dissent (with words, actions or gestures) is punished with a yellow card and, if play is stopped because of the dissent, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team.

If the words or gestures are offensive, insulting or abusive, the player must be shown a red card.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player shows clear dissent by running at the referee but does not say anything?

The player is shown a yellow card.

a player shows clear dissent with gestures but does not say anything?

The player is shown a yellow card.

play is stopped because of dissent?

An indirect free kick is awarded and the offending player is shown a yellow card.

For further information, click [here](#).

BALL

REQUIREMENTS

The ball must be round and made of a safe and suitable material. Its size depends on the age of the players, e.g. smaller balls are used for youth/ children's football.

The Laws give the required ball size, weight and pressure. The ball must be pumped up (inflated) so that it is not soft or too hard.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The referee must check the ball before the game starts and at any time during the game when:

- the ball sounds or feels flat
- players complain about the ball
- the ball is changed (unless a multi-ball system is being used; in this case, the referee must check all the balls before the game starts)

The ball cannot be changed without the referee's permission, except when a multi-ball system is being used.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball bursts or goes flat while it is in play?

The referee drops the ball for one player of the team that last touched the ball (defending team goalkeeper if in the penalty area).

the ball bursts or goes flat during a stoppage?

The game restarts as if the ball had not burst or gone flat.

the ball bursts or goes flat at a penalty kick or during penalties, after it has been kicked and before it touches another player or rebounds off the goalposts or crossbar?

The penalty kick is retaken.

the ball bursts or goes flat at a penalty kick or during penalties, after it has been kicked and after it touches another player or rebounds off the goalposts or crossbar?

Penalty kick: play restarts with a dropped ball.
During penalties: the kick is recorded as 'missed'.

For further information, click [here](#).

BALL IN & BALL OUT OF PLAY

DEFINITION

The ball is out of play when:

- it completely crosses the touchline or goal line, on the ground or in the air
- it touches the referee or another match official, stays on the pitch and a promising attack, change of possession or goal occurs
- the referee stops play

At all other times, the ball is in play, including if it rebounds off a goalpost, crossbar or corner flagpost and stays on the pitch.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball touches the referee or another match official and then goes out of play?

Play restarts as if the ball had not touched the referee or another match official, e.g. throw-in, goal kick, etc.

the ball touches the referee or another match official, stays on the pitch and the team in possession of the ball changes?

Play restarts with a dropped ball (see: Dropped ball).

the ball touches the referee or another match official and goes into the goal?

Play restarts with a dropped ball (see: Dropped ball).

the ball touches the referee or another match official, stays on the pitch and a promising attack starts?

Play restarts with a dropped ball (see: Dropped ball).

the referee blows the whistle by mistake and stops the game?

Play restarts with a dropped ball (see: Dropped ball).

For further information, click [here](#).

CAPTAINS

DEFINITION

Each team is led by a captain who usually wears an armband for identification. The captain may be changed during a game.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The captains should take responsibility for the behaviour of their team-mates, encouraging them to play fairly and show respect towards the match officials and their decisions. However, they cannot be shown a red or yellow card for offences committed by a team-mate.

The captains have no special privileges to protest or argue with the referee or other match officials.

Both captains take part in the coin toss:

- before kick-off and before extra time to determine who kicks off and which goal to attack
- before penalties, to determine who takes the first kick and which goal will be used

For further information, click [here](#).

COACHES & OTHER TEAM OFFICIALS

REQUIREMENTS

There are usually three categories of people named on the team list: players, substitutes and team officials.

The head coach is the senior team official and is responsible for the behaviour of everyone in the technical area, including substitutes, substituted players and the other team officials, e.g.

- assistant coaches
- medical staff (doctor, physiotherapist, etc.)
- administrative staff

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Only team officials named on the team list are allowed on the benches/in the technical area (if there is one).

The team officials must remain on the benches or in the technical area unless permitted to come onto the pitch by the referee, e.g. to assess or treat an injured player.

Only one person at a time is allowed to stand and coach.

The referee has authority over the team officials, and they can be shown a red or yellow card for misbehaviour (see: Red cards and Yellow cards).

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

someone in the technical area commits an offence but the offender cannot be identified?

The head coach is shown a red or yellow card (depending on the offence).

a team official leaves the technical area to watch from the stand and then returns to the technical area?

This is allowed.

a team official uses a laptop or other electronic equipment in the technical area?

This is allowed, as long as it does not cause arguing, dissent, protests, etc.

someone is a player/coach and wants to be a substitute for the game?

They must be shown on the team list as a substitute and not as a team official. They are allowed to act as a coach until they go onto the pitch to play.

For further information, click [here](#).

COMPETITION RULES

DEFINITION

In addition to the Laws of the Game, all competitive matches (leagues, cups, knockouts, etc.) have competition rules, which include important information that affects the game. Competition rules will vary according to the level of football.

WHAT COMPETITION RULES ARE IMPORTANT FOR A GAME?

Some competition rules may link directly to the 'General modifications' section of the Laws, which allows competitions to modify a number of Laws (size of the pitch, goals and ball; number of substitutions; duration of the halves, etc.) for grassroots, youth/children's, disability and veterans football. Below are some important areas, determined by competition rules, that the referee, other match officials and team officials of both teams should be aware of:

- **How long the game (and extra time) lasts**
 - > Whether the standard length of the halves of the game (45 minutes) and extra time (15 minutes) may be shorter:
 - for youth/children's, disability football
 - because of a late kick-off, bad weather, etc.
- **Team lists**
 - > Whether each team must give a team list to:
 - the referee
 - the opponents
 - > If team lists are required:
 - is there an official team list document?
 - must it be signed, and if so, by whom?
 - is there a deadline by which the team list must be given to the referee (and opponents), e.g. at least 30 minutes before kick-off?
 - can changes be made to the team list after it has been submitted, e.g. if a player becomes ill/injured?
- **Substitutes**
 - > How many substitutes can each team:
 - name on the team list?
 - use during the game?
 - > How many substitution opportunities does each team have? *This usually only applies in top level football, where the maximum is three (substitutions made during half-time do not count as an opportunity)*
 - > Is a team allowed an extra substitute and, where appropriate, an extra substitution opportunity during extra time?
- **Scores are level at full-time in a cup/knockout game**
 - > Is there:
 - extra time and then, if necessary, penalties?
 - no extra time, only penalties?
 - an away goals rule that applies before extra time/penalties?
- **Other areas that might be included in the competition rules**
 - > What to do if:
 - both teams have the same colour shirts, i.e. which team must change
 - the referee (or another match official) does not arrive or cannot continue
 - there are doubts about whether the pitch is playable (due to ice, snow, waterlogged surface, etc.)
 - the floodlights go out

continued

COMPETITION RULES

- there are problems with spectators
- the game is interrupted by bad weather
- the technology (VAR system or goal line technology) stops working

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

something happens which is against, or not mentioned, in the competition rules?

The problem should be dealt with immediately where possible.

If the problem cannot be solved, a decision will need to be taken about whether the game can start/continue.

The matter should always be reported to the competition organisers after the game.

CORNER AREA & FLAGS

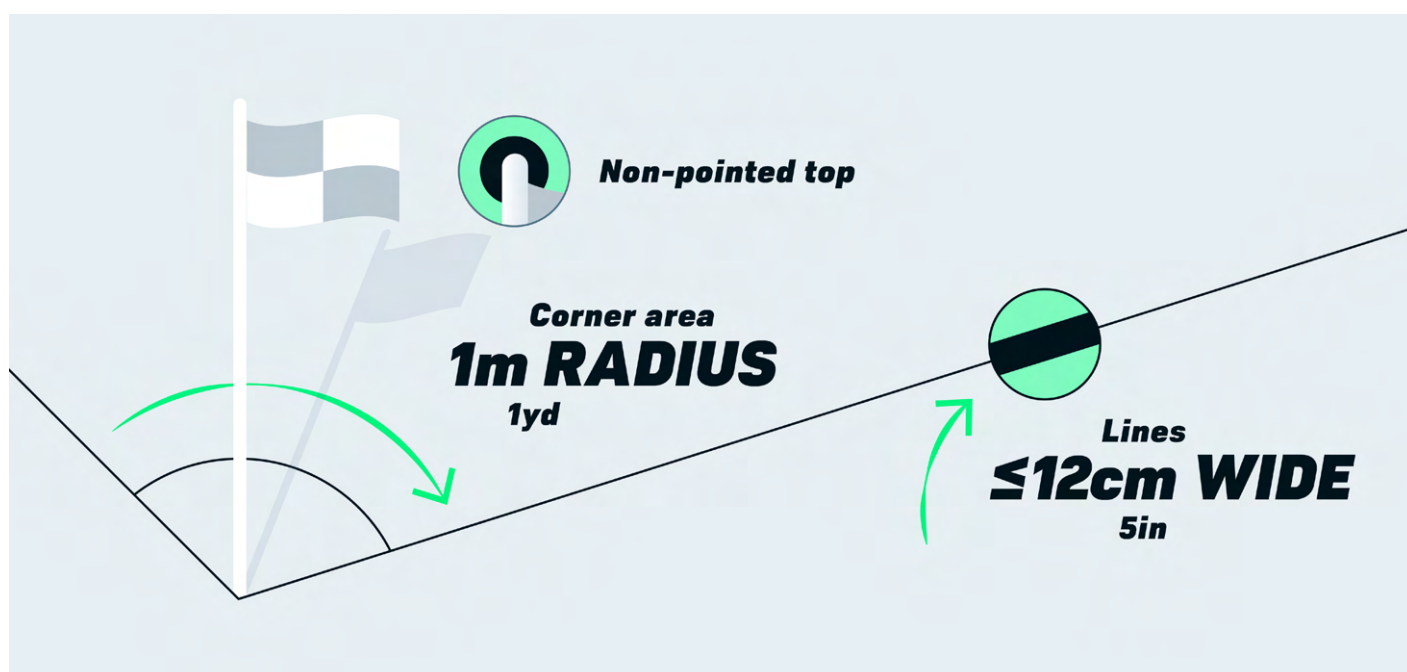
REQUIREMENTS

The pitch must have a corner flag (a post with a flag at the top) at each of its four corners. Corner flags must be at least 1.5 m (5 ft) high and must not be pointed or dangerous.

Players must not move the corner flag to take a corner kick or throw-in.

There is a curved line (arc) drawn inside the pitch from the touchline to the goal line with a radius of 1 m (1 yd) from the corner flag. When a corner kick is taken, part of the ball must be on or overhanging this line, or is fully inside the line.

Sometimes, a small line can be marked outside the pitch 9.15 m (10 yds) along the touchlines and/or goal lines to help opponents stay at least 9.15 m (10 yds) away at a corner kick.



At most levels, if there are no or not enough corner flags or if one breaks, the game should still be played.

CORNER KICK

DEFINITION

A corner kick is awarded when the whole of the ball goes out over the goal line (but not in the goal), whether on the ground or in the air, and when it was last touched by a defending team player.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The corner kick is taken from the corner area on the side of the pitch where the ball went out of play.

The ball must be:

- stationary (not moving)
- inside the corner area (it can overhang the corner arc)

All opponents must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the corner arc.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.

The kicker cannot touch the ball again until someone else has touched it.

A goal is scored if the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball is moving?

The kick is retaken.

the ball is not in the corner area?

The kick is retaken.

an opponent is not 9.15 m (10 yds) away and interferes with the game?

The kick is retaken, and a yellow card is shown to the offending player.

the ball goes straight into the opponents' goal?

A goal is awarded.

the ball goes straight into the kicker's goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

continued

CORNER KICK

the ball goes straight out over the touchline?

A throw-in is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight out over the goal line?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team (direct free kick if the kicker commits a handball offence; penalty if the offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded).

For further information, click [here](#).

DRINKS & COOLING BREAKS

DEFINITION

A drinks break is when the game is stopped for players to rehydrate.

A cooling break is when the game is stopped to let the players cool down.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

A drinks break:

- usually occurs around the middle of each half
- must not last more than one minute
- involves the players:
 - > getting drinks from their team officials
 - > staying on the pitch
- should not become a coaching session

A cooling break:

- usually occurs around the middle of each half
- must not last more than three minutes
- involves the players:
 - > getting drinks from their team officials
 - > sitting/standing in the shade (if possible) – they may leave the pitch to do so
- should not become a coaching session

The competition rules may define the weather conditions needed for drinks breaks and/or cooling breaks to be allowed. Temperature and humidity are the key factors to be taken into account.

If there are no specific competition rules, common sense is used when the temperature is high and/or it is very humid, and the referee decides whether a break is necessary.

The referee adds the time taken for any drinks/cooling breaks to the additional time at the end of the half in which they occurred.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

teams/players try to take a longer break than is allowed?

The referee must insist that the game restart promptly.

For further information, click [here](#).

DROPPED BALL / *BOUNCED BALL*

DEFINITION

If the referee stops the game and no foul or other offence has occurred, the game restarts with a dropped ball.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The referee restarts play with a dropped ball when:

- play stops because of an injury or something serious (bad weather, spectators on the pitch, a spectator blows a whistle that interferes with the game, floodlights go out, etc.)
- play is stopped because of interference by an outside agent
- the ball touches the referee (or another match official), stays on the pitch and:
 - > goes into the goal
 - > the team in possession of the ball changes
 - > a promising attack starts
- the referee blows the whistle by mistake and stops the game

When there is a dropped ball:

- the referee drops the ball
- players from both teams must be at least 4 m (4.5 yds) from the ball, apart from the player receiving the dropped ball
- the ball is in play when it touches the ground – it must not be touched before that
- the player receiving the dropped ball can continue playing with it but cannot score unless it touches at least one other player (from either team)

The ball is dropped for a player of the team that last touched the ball at the place where it last touched a player, match official or outside agent. However, the ball is dropped for the goalkeeper (regardless of which team last touched the ball) if, when the referee stopped play:

- the last touch was in the penalty area or
- the ball was in the penalty area (whether on the ground or in the air)

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player touches the ball before it touches the ground?

The dropped ball is retaken.

a player is less than 4 m (4.5 yds) away?

The dropped ball is retaken and the offending player may be shown a yellow card.

the ball goes out over the goal line or touchline without touching any player?

The dropped ball is retaken.

continued

DROPPED BALL / BOUNCED BALL

the ball goes into either goal without touching any player (including the player the ball is dropped for)?

The dropped ball is retaken.

the ball goes into the goal of the player who received the dropped ball without the ball touching another player?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes into the opponents' goal of the player who received the dropped ball without the ball touching another player?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

For further information, click [here](#).

EXTRA PERSON OR OBJECT ON THE PITCH / OUTSIDE AGENT

DEFINITION

An outside agent is anyone or anything that should not be on the pitch during the game. This can include:

- a person who is not a player, substitute, team official or match official (e.g. a spectator or ball boy/girl)
- an animal
- an object thrown by a spectator
- a structure, e.g. an overhanging branch

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The referee should try to make sure that any outside agent does not interfere with the game, the players, the referee or the other match officials.

When the game is stopped because of outside interference, play restarts with a dropped ball for the team that last touched the ball before the game was stopped (see: Dropped ball).

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

there is no interference with the game?

The referee can allow the game to continue.

there is interference with the game?

The referee stops play and the outside agent must be removed from the pitch. Play restarts with a dropped ball.

there is interference with the ball when it is going into the goal but it still goes in?

The goal can be awarded if the interference did not stop any defenders or the goalkeeper from playing the ball.

there is interference at a penalty kick (including during penalties) before the ball reaches the goal/goalkeeper?

The kick is retaken.

there is interference at a penalty kick after the ball rebounds off the goalposts, crossbar or goalkeeper?

Penalty kick: play restarts with a dropped ball.
During penalties: the kick is recorded as missed.

continued

EXTRA PERSON OR OBJECT **ON THE PITCH** / OUTSIDE AGENT

the referee stops play for an offence committed by a player against an outside agent?

Play restarts with a dropped ball, unless an indirect free kick is awarded for leaving the pitch without the referee's permission.

For further information, click [here](#).

FEINTING / DUMMYING

DEFINITION

Feinting is when a player tries to trick an opponent by pretending (dummying) to kick the ball, but then delays the kick or does not kick the ball. Feinting is allowed for free kicks, goal kicks and corner kicks. At a penalty kick the kicker can stop and start in the run-up but is not allowed to feint to kick the ball once they have completed the run-up.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

If, when taking a free kick, goal kick or corner kick, the kicker feints to take the kick, the opponents must remain at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball until the kick is taken.

When a penalty is being taken, the kicker:

- can stop and start during the run-up
- must kick the ball immediately at the end of their run-up, i.e. they cannot feint (pretend) to kick the ball

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

(Free kicks, goal kicks, corner kicks)

the kicker feints to kick the ball, and an opponent moves closer than 9.15 m (10 yds) to the ball and interferes with the kick?

The opponent is shown a yellow card and the kick is retaken.

(Penalty kick and during penalties)

the kicker feints at the end of the run-up but does not kick the ball?

The kicker is shown a yellow card and the kick is then taken correctly.

(Penalty kick and during penalties)

the kicker feints at the end of the run-up and then kicks the ball?

Penalty kick: the kicker is shown a yellow card and an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team.

During penalties: the kicker is shown a yellow card and the kick is recorded as missed.

FOULS

DEFINITION

A foul is an unfair physical offence committed against an opponent, usually with the foot/leg or hand/arm but sometimes with other parts of the body.

Offences that are not committed against an opponent are not fouls, e.g. handball, offside, etc.

Most fouls are punished with a direct free kick being awarded to the other team. However, most fouls involving no contact with the opponent result in an indirect free kick being awarded to the other team.

There are different disciplinary actions for different categories of fouls:

No card

- Careless
 - > Non-intentional/routine foul that does not show consideration/care for the opponent

Yellow card

- Reckless
 - > Quite serious foul that could cause a risk of injury to the opponent
- Stopping a promising attack (SPA)
 - > Tactical foul that stops a promising attack – the seriousness of the foul does not matter

Red card

- Excessive force/serious foul play
 - > Intense foul that endangers the safety of the opponent and creates a risk of serious injury
- Denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO)
 - > Tactical foul that stops a goal or very clear chance to score – the seriousness of the foul does not matter
- Violent conduct
 - > Intense foul with a lot of force that occurs away from the ball
 - > Does not involve trying to play the ball, e.g. punching, kicking, head-butting
 - > If it occurs after play has stopped, then it is not a foul and a free kick cannot be given, but the player must still be shown a red card

What fouls are punished with a direct free kick?

The following fouls are punished with a direct free kick if committed against an opponent in a way that is considered careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- unfairly charging/bumping
- jumping at
- kicking or trying to kick
- pushing
- hitting/striking or trying to hit/strike (including a head-butt)
- unfairly tackling/challenging
- tripping or trying to trip

The following fouls are also punished with a direct free kick, but no judgement of carelessness, recklessness or excessive force is necessary; they may be offences that stop a promising attack (SPA) or deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO):

- holding an opponent
- playing dangerously* e.g. high foot (with contact)

continued

FOULS

- obstructing/impeding an opponent's progress** (with contact)
- biting or spitting at anyone on the team lists or a match official
- throwing something at the ball, an opponent or a match official, or using/holding something to make contact with the ball.

What fouls are punished with an indirect free kick?

The following fouls are punished with an indirect free kick as long as there is no contact (contact fouls require a direct free kick):

- playing dangerously* e.g. high foot (no contact)
- obstructing/impeding an opponent's progress** (no contact)
- preventing/blocking a goalkeeper from releasing the ball from their hands
- trying to kick/play the ball when the goalkeeper is holding it
- committing any other offence not mentioned in the Laws, for which play is stopped to show a player a red or yellow card

**Playing dangerously is when a player attempts to play the ball and could injure someone (including the player themselves) and/or prevents a nearby opponent from trying to play the ball for the fear of getting injured. An overhead, bicycle or scissors kick is allowed if there is no danger to a player from the other team.*

***Obstruction is when a player moves into an opponent's path to block, slow down or force a change of direction when neither player can play the ball. It is not a foul if players are already in each other's space and an accidental collision or contact results.*

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player tries to trip, strike, kick or jump at an opponent but does not make contact?

Even though there is no contact, a direct free kick is awarded (or penalty kick if the offence takes place in the offender's penalty area), as these are serious offences.

a high foot makes contact with an opponent?

A direct free kick is awarded (or penalty kick if the offence takes place in the offender's penalty area) and the player may be shown a red or yellow card.

there is a foul by Team A and then a foul by Team B before the referee can stop play?

The first foul is punished, i.e. a free kick is awarded to Team B (or a penalty kick if the offence took place in Team A's penalty area).

two fouls occur at the same time?

The more serious foul is punished, e.g. a physical foul is more serious than handball.

there is a technical offence (e.g. offside) by Team A and then a foul by Team B before the referee can stop play?

The first offence is punished, i.e. the offside, and a free kick is awarded to Team B.

continued

FOULS

a foul and technical offence occur at the same time (e.g. foul and offside)?

The foul is punished (more serious offence).

a stopping a promising attack (SPA) foul is also a reckless foul?

A yellow card is shown to the player for being reckless, which is more serious than the tactical nature of SPA.

a foul is committed, but the fouled team can continue with the ball?

The referee can allow play to continue (see: Advantage).

For further information, click [here](#).

FREE KICKS

DEFINITION

Direct and indirect free kicks are awarded to the opposing team for offences committed by players, substitutes, substituted players, sent-off players or team officials.

A direct free kick offence committed in the offending player's penalty area results in a penalty kick being awarded.

A goal can be scored from a direct free kick without another player touching the ball.

A goal can only be scored from an indirect free kick if, before entering the goal, the ball touches another player (from either team).

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

If an indirect free kick is awarded, the referee raises one arm above the head and keeps it in this position until the kick has been taken and:

- the ball goes out of play or touches another player
- there is no possibility of the ball going directly into the goal

Free kicks are taken from the place where the offence occurred except:

- for an offence committed in the goal area:
 - > a free kick for the defending team can be taken from anywhere in the goal area
 - > an indirect free kick for the attacking team is taken on the line of the goal area that is parallel to the goal line closest to where the offence occurred
- for the offence of leaving, entering or re-entering the pitch without permission, the free kick is taken from the position of the ball when play was stopped
- for an offence committed off the pitch, the free kick is taken on the boundary line closest to where the offence occurred (if it is a direct free kick offence and the point on the boundary line is in the offending player's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded)

When a free kick is taken:

- the ball:
 - > must be stationary (not moving)
 - > is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- until the ball is in play, all opponents must remain:
 - > at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball, unless they are on their own goal line between the goalposts (in cases where there is an indirect free kick closer than 9.15 m (10 yds) to the goal line)
 - > outside the penalty area for a free kick inside the opponents' penalty area
- if the defending team make a defensive wall of three players or more, all attacking team players must be at least 1 m (1 yd) from the wall until the ball is in play
- the kicker cannot touch the ball again until another player (from either team) has touched it

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a direct free kick goes into the opponents' goal without another player touching it?

A goal is awarded.

continued

FREE KICKS

an indirect free kick goes into the opponents' goal without another player touching it?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

a direct or indirect free kick goes into the kicker's goal without another player touching it?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the referee awards an indirect free kick but forgets to use the arm signal and the ball goes into the goal without another player touching it?

The free kick is retaken by the same team.

the ball is moving when the kick is taken?

The free kick is retaken by the same team.

the free kick is taken from the wrong position?

The free kick is retaken by the same team.

the kicker touches the ball again before another player has touched it?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

A yellow card is shown if the second touch stopped a promising attack.

A red card is shown if the second touch stopped a goal or denied the opponents an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

the kicker feints (pretends) to take the free kick?

This is allowed.

an opponent is less than 9.15 m (10 yds) from a free kick when it is taken and interferes with the kick?

Unless the referee plays advantage, the kick is retaken and the offending player is shown a yellow card.

continued

FREE KICKS

an opponent is less than 9.15 m (10 yds) from a free kick, but the kick is taken quickly and the opponent did not have time to get back at least 9.15 m (10 yds)?

If there is no interference, play continues.

If the free kick is stopped by the opponent, then it is retaken.

If the free kick is taken and the ball is then intercepted, play continues.

there is a free kick to the defending team inside their own penalty area and an opponent enters or is inside the penalty area before the kick is taken and interferes with the kick?

Unless the referee plays advantage, the kick is retaken.

there is a free kick to the defending team inside their own penalty area, but the kick is taken quickly and there is an opponent inside the penalty area?

If there is no interference, play continues.

If the free kick is stopped by the opponent, then it is retaken.

If the free kick is taken and the ball is then intercepted, play continues.

For further information, click [here](#).

GOAL AREA

DEFINITION

The goal area is the smaller rectangular area of the pitch, which is inside the penalty area. Two boundary lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 5.5 m (6 yds) from the inside of the goalposts. These lines extend into the pitch for 5.5 m (6 yds) and are joined by a line running parallel with the goal line. Goal kicks are taken from this area.

GOAL KICK

DEFINITION

A goal kick is awarded when the whole of the ball goes out over the goal line (but not in the goal), on the ground or in the air, and it was last touched by an attacking team player.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The kick can be taken from anywhere in the goal area.

The ball must be stationary (not moving).

All players of the other team must be outside the penalty area until the ball is kicked, unless the kick is taken so quickly that they do not have time to leave the penalty area.

The ball

- is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- does not have to leave the penalty area before it can be played by another player

The kicker cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball is moving when the goal kick is taken?

The goal kick is retaken.

the ball is not in the goal area when the goal kick is taken?

The goal kick is retaken.

an opponent stays in the penalty area and interferes with the goal kick?

The goal kick is retaken and the player may be shown a yellow card.

an opponent does not have time to leave the penalty area and intercepts with the goal kick?

Play continues, as long as the player did not prevent the kick from being taken.

the ball goes straight out over the touchline?

A throw-in is awarded to the other team.

continued

GOAL KICK

the ball goes straight out over the team's own goal line?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight out over the opponents' goal line?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight into the kicker's own goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight into the opponents' goal?

A goal is awarded.

the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

an 'illegal' second touch stops a promising attack?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown to the offending player.

an 'illegal' second touch stops the ball from going into the goal?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown to the offending player (a goal has not been prevented because if the goal had gone into the goal, it would be a corner kick).

an 'illegal' second touch denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and a red card is shown to the offending player.

For further information, click [here](#).

GOAL LINE TECHNOLOGY (GLT)

DEFINITION

Goal line technology is a system of cameras and/or sensors and computers that automatically sends a signal to the referee's watch and/or headset within one second when the whole of the ball has passed over the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar. The referee can then award the goal.

For further information, click [here](#).

GOALKEEPERS

DEFINITION

Each team must have a goalkeeper (goalie/keeper) whose shirt must be a different colour from the rest of their own team and the other team. If there is no goalkeeper, the game cannot continue.

WHAT CAN THEY DO?

A goalkeeper is allowed to:

- use their hands/arms to play the ball inside their own penalty area, except from a throw-in or backpass (deliberate kick) from a team-mate
- bounce or throw the ball in the air
- wear additional equipment, e.g. gloves, cap, tracksuit bottoms
- take part in normal play outside their penalty area (without using their hands/arms)
- take a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, free kick, penalty kick or dropped ball
- hold the ball for no more than six seconds, after gaining control* of it with their hands
- change places with another player, as long as the referee is informed and the change occurs when the game is stopped

*The goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball with their hand(s) when:

- touching it with any part of the hand/arm, except during a save or an attempt to prevent the ball going into or near their goal
- holding it with their hand(s)
- bouncing it on the ground or throwing it in the air
- it is between their hands and/or any surface (e.g. ground or own body)

The goalkeeper cannot be challenged by an opponent when in control of the ball with their hand(s).

WHAT CAN THEY NOT DO?

A goalkeeper is not allowed to:

- touch the ball with their hands/arms outside their penalty area
- touch the ball with their hand/arms if a team-mate:
 - > deliberately kicks it to them (backpass)
 - > throws it to them directly from a throw-in
- hold the ball for more than six seconds
- touch the ball with the hand/arm after releasing it from their hands (this does not include after making a save) and before it has touched another player
- touch the ball again after taking a free kick, goal kick, corner kick, penalty kick or throw-in until it has touched another player
- score a goal with their hands/arms against the other team
- hang onto the crossbar to make a save
- have one or both feet in front or behind the goal line until the penalty kick is taken (see: Penalty kick and Penalties)
- unfairly distract the kicker, e.g. delay the kick, or touch or shake the goalposts, crossbar or goal net when a penalty is taken

continued

GOALKEEPERS

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a goalkeeper handles a backpass?

An indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown.

handles a throw-in directly from a team-mate?

An indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown.

handles the ball again after a save?

Play continues.

commits a handball offence outside their penalty area?

A direct free kick is awarded and:

- a yellow card is shown if a promising attack was stopped, or
- a red card is shown if a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity was denied.

holds the ball for longer than six seconds?

An indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown.

throws the ball into the opponents' goal

A goal kick is awarded.

throws the ball into their own goal?

A goal is awarded.

hangs onto the crossbar to make a save?

An indirect free kick is awarded and, if a goal was stopped, the goalkeeper is shown a red card.

touches/shakes the goal posts, crossbar or goal net before or during a penalty kick?

The referee awards the goal if the kicker scores, but if it is missed, the kick is retaken.

GOALS

REQUIREMENTS

There must be a goal at each end of the pitch in the middle of the goal line. Goals consist of two vertical goalposts joined at the top by a crossbar, all of which must be white.

Goals for adults' football must be 7.32 m (8 yds) wide and 2.44 m (8 ft) high. Smaller goals are allowed for youth/children's football.

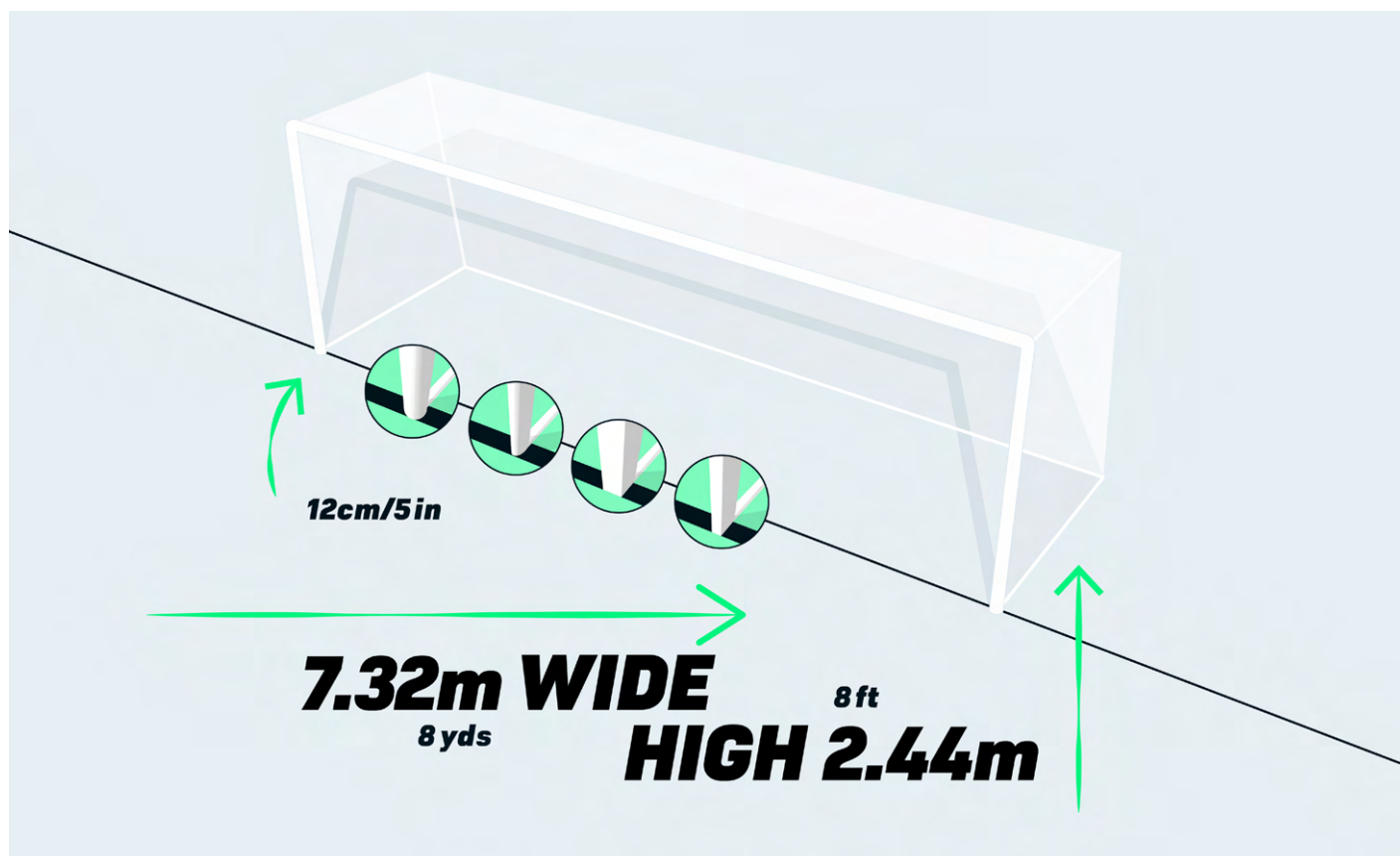
The posts and crossbar of both goals must be the same width (maximum 12 cm / 5 in) and shape (square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a mixture of these shapes).

For safety reasons, all goals (including portable goals) must be securely fixed to the ground.

Nets are not compulsory, but if they are used, they must be fixed to the goalposts, crossbar and the ground, making sure that the goalkeeper has enough space to move.

If the crossbar breaks, it must be replaced or fixed. A rope or any other flexible or dangerous material cannot be used to replace the crossbar. Therefore, if it cannot be suitably replaced or fixed, the game must be abandoned.

Cameras and/or microphones are not allowed to be in or attached to the goalposts, crossbars or goal nets.



For further information, click [here](#).

HANDBALL

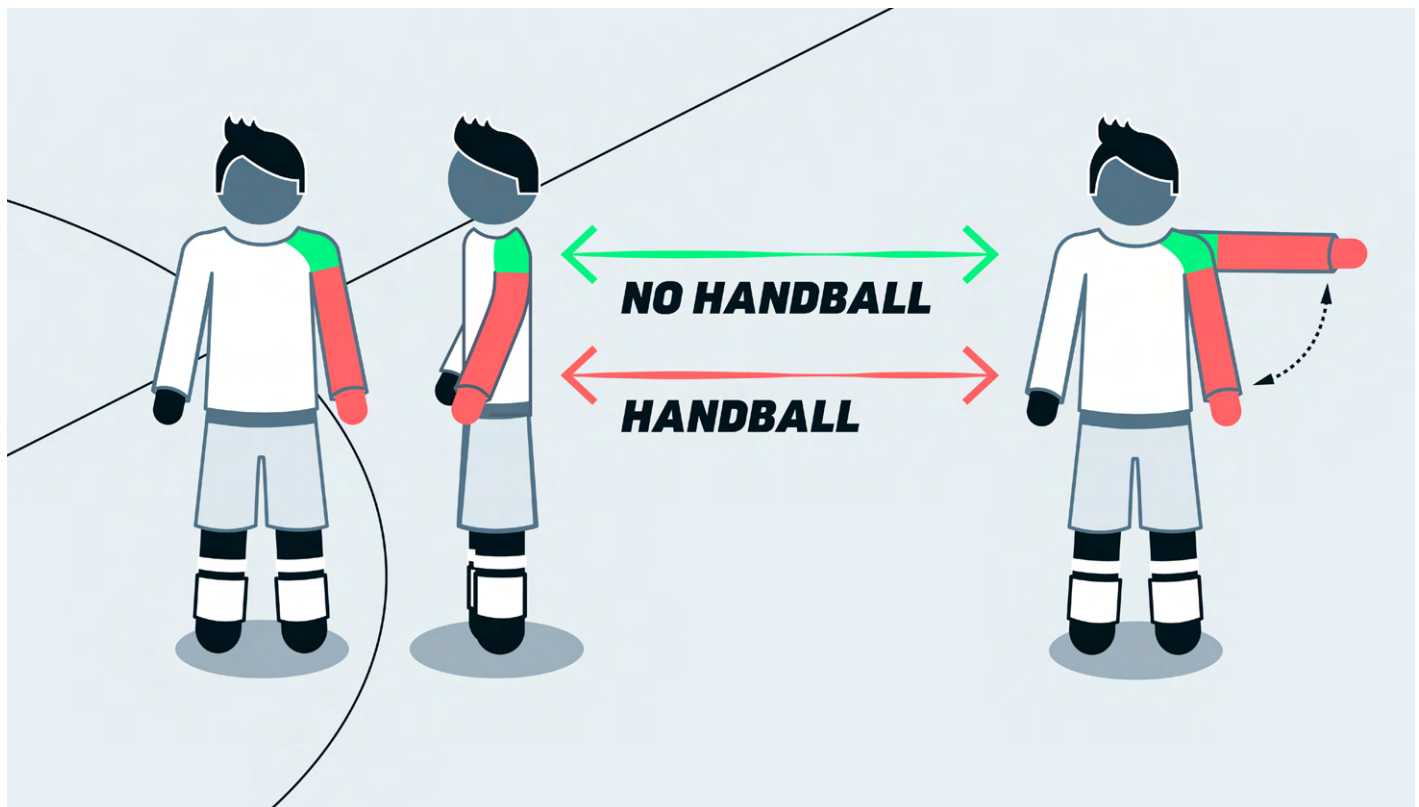
DEFINITION

Handball is the illegal contact with or touch of the ball with the hand(s) and/or arm(s). However, it is not automatically a handball offence every time the ball touches a player's hand/arm.

A handball offence is when a player (except the goalkeeper in their own penalty area):

- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm
- touches the ball with their hand/arm when it is in a position that makes their body unnaturally bigger and when that position is not the result of their body moving fairly as part of play
- scores a goal against the other team with their hand/arm or scores immediately after the ball touches their hand/arm (even if the touch was accidental)

**The hand and the arm below the bottom of the armpit are the parts of the body used for a possible handball offence.*



A handball is punished with a direct free kick (or a penalty if the handball offence occurs in the player's own penalty area).

Goalkeepers are allowed to use their hands/arms to touch, catch and hold the ball in their own penalty area, except in some situations e.g. a backpass or throw-in (see: Goalkeepers).

continued

HANDBALL

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player is falling and the ball hits their supporting arm, which is between their body and the ground?

This is not handball (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team).

a player is hit on the hand/arm by the ball from a team-mate's kick/header?

This is not handball (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team).

a player heads/kicks the ball and it then hits their own hand/arm?

This is not handball (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team).

a player prevents the ball from going into their own goal with their hand/arm but does not deliberately handle the ball and does not make their body unnaturally bigger?

This is not handball.

a player tries to score with their hand/arm?

A direct free kick is awarded to the other team and a yellow card is shown to the offending player (even if the attempt to score is unsuccessful).

For further information, click [here](#).

INJURIES

DEFINITION

Depending on the seriousness of the injury, the referee must make sure an injured player is assessed and, if necessary, treated as soon as possible.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN

If a player is injured, the referee should stop the game if the injury is, or appears to be, serious. If a player is, or appears to be, only slightly injured, the referee allows play to continue.

An injured player can be assessed on the pitch but should not be treated on the pitch unless it is a serious injury.

A player who is assessed or treated on the pitch must then leave, except when:

- a goalkeeper is injured
- a goalkeeper and an outfield player collide with each other and need attention
- players from the same team collide and need attention
- a player is injured by a foul for which the offender is shown a red or yellow card
- a penalty kick has been awarded and the injured player will take the kick

A player who leaves the pitch after assessment/treatment may only return to the pitch after play has restarted and the referee has signalled for the player to do so. If the game is stopped, the player can return to the pitch from the goal line or touchline, but if the ball is in play, the player can only return to the pitch from the touchline.

If the referee stops play for an injury and no offence has occurred, play restarts with a dropped ball (see: Dropped ball).

The referee must include the time taken for an injury in 'additional time' at the end of each half.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the stretcher is brought onto the pitch?

The injured player must leave the pitch on the stretcher or walking. If they do not, they are shown a yellow card.

an injured player needs to be shown a red or yellow card?

The card must be shown before the player leaves the pitch.

KICK-OFF

DEFINITION

A kick-off:

- starts each half of normal time
- starts each half of extra time
- restarts the game after a goal has been scored

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Before the game starts, the referee calls the two captains together for the toss of a coin.

If the captain that wins the coin toss:

- chooses which goal to attack in the first half, the other team takes the kick-off
- chooses to kick off, the other captain will choose which goal to attack in the first half

The opponents of the team that takes the kick-off in the first half will take the kick-off in the second half.

The above procedure is followed again if the game goes to extra time.

If a team scores a goal, the other team takes the kick-off to restart the game.

At the kick-off:

- the ball must be stationary (not moving) on the centre spot
- all players must be on the pitch and in their own half, except the player taking the kick-off, who can be in the other team's half
- the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball (i.e. outside the centre circle) until it is in play
- the referee gives a signal for the kick-off to take place
- the ball can be kicked in any direction and is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- a goal can be scored if the ball is kicked straight into the other team's goal but not into the kicker's own goal
- the kicker cannot touch the ball again until it has touched another player

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball is moving or not on the centre spot?

The kick-off is retaken.

one or more players (except the kicker) are not in their own half?

The kick-off is retaken.

a team kicks off after conceding a goal while the other team are off the pitch celebrating?

The kick-off is retaken, as all players must be on the pitch and in their own half.

continued

KICK-OFF

the players of the other team are not 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball when the kick-off is taken?

The kick-off is retaken, unless the referee plays advantage.

the ball is kicked straight into the other team's goal?

A goal is awarded.

the ball is kicked straight into the kicker's goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the kicker touches the ball again before it touches another player?

An indirect free kick is awarded. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

For further information, click [here](#).

LAWS OF THE GAME

The Laws of the Game are association football's only officially valid set of Laws/rules and are published annually by The IFAB.

With a high level of detail, the Laws serve as the official guidelines for match officials, players and everyone involved in football and make sure that all participants have a solid point of reference. However, the Laws cannot deal with every possible situation, so where something happens which is not mentioned in the Laws, The IFAB expects the referee to make a decision within the 'spirit' of the game and its Laws – this often involves asking the question, "what would football want/expect?"

The fact that the Laws of the Game are the same for all levels of football around the world, from the FIFA World Cup™ through to a game between children, is a considerable strength which must continue for the good of football everywhere.

The Laws of the Game are available in the five official IFAB languages English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese as well as, thanks to the help of national associations, in some other languages. All available editions and languages can be downloaded [here](#).

Changes to the Laws of the Game can only be made at The IFAB's Annual General Meeting (AGM), which usually takes place in March, and require a three-quarter majority of The IFAB's members. Any changes approved at the AGM become part of the Laws of the Game as of 1 July. Find out more about the decision-making process on theifab.com.

OBSTRUCTION / IMPEDING

DEFINITION

Obstruction, or impeding the progress of an opponent, is when a player unfairly uses their body to prevent an opponent from getting to and/or playing the ball.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Every player has a right to their position on the pitch.

A player can use their body to shield the ball from an opponent in order to make it difficult for the opponent to get to the ball, as long as the ball is within playing distance*. A player who is shielding the ball is allowed to be fairly charged (shoulder-to-shoulder) by an opponent.

**Playing distance means that the player could touch the ball if they stretched their foot/leg or jumped (including hands/arms for goalkeepers).*

If a player obstructs an opponent, the referee awards:

- a direct free kick if there is contact with the opponent
- an indirect free kick if there is no contact

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

obstruction stops a promising attack?

A free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown.

obstruction stops a goal/denies the opponents an obvious goal-scoring opportunity?

A free kick is awarded and a red card is shown.

For further information, click [here](#).

OFFSIDE

DEFINITION

A player is penalised for offside if they are in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched (deliberately or accidentally) by a team-mate and the offside player then commits an offside offence.

OFFSIDE POSITION

A player is in an offside position when any part of their body* is:

- in the other team's half (the halfway line does not count) and
- closer to the opponents' goal line than both:
 - > the second-last opponent, including the goalkeeper and
 - > the ball

**the hands and arms of all players (including the goalkeepers) are not included when judging an offside position.*

The player's position is judged at the moment the ball is played/touched by one of their team-mates.

NO OFFSIDE POSITION

A player is not in an offside position when they are:

- in their own half or on the halfway line
- behind or in line (level) with the second-last opponent (including the goalkeeper)
- behind or in line (level) with the ball
- in the opponents' goal, as long as they are not committing an offside offence, e.g. interfering with the goalkeeper or a defender

When else is a player not offside?

Even if they are in an offside position, a player is not penalised for offside if they receive the ball:

- when the ball is deliberately played by an opponent, including the goalkeeper, unless it is a save, i.e. an attempt to stop the ball from going into or very close to the goal
- from an opponent's deliberate handball
- directly from a:
 - > throw-in
 - > corner kick
 - > goal kick

OFFSIDE OFFENCE

There are three different offside offences:

- interfering with play by playing or touching the ball (with any part of the body)
- interfering with an opponent by:
 - > preventing them from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing their line of vision, especially the goalkeeper
 - > challenging them for the ball
 - > trying to play the ball when it is close and this affects an opponent
 - > making an obvious action/movement that clearly affects an opponent's ability to play the ball
- gaining an advantage by playing the ball or interfering with an opponent when the ball:

continued

OFFSIDE

- > rebounds or deflects off:
 - the goalpost or crossbar
 - an opponent
 - the referee or another match official
- > has been deliberately saved by an opponent, i.e. in an attempt to stop the ball from going into or very close to the goal

If a player is penalised for offside, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team where the offence occurred; this can be in the player's own half.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player is in an offside position?

A player in an offside position is not penalised if they do not commit an offside offence.

a player in an offside position is fouled without committing an offside offence?

The foul is penalised.

a player in an offside position is fouled before committing an offside offence?

The foul is penalised.

a player deliberately leaves the pitch?

- If it is a defending player:
 - > The player is considered to be on the goal line or touchline for the purposes of offside and is shown a yellow card at the next stoppage
- If it is an attacking player (who does not get involved in the play):
 - > Play continues – no yellow card
- If it is an attacking player (who re-enters the pitch and gets involved in the play):
 - > If the player was in an offside position it is an indirect free kick for offside
 - > If the player was not offside it is an indirect free kick and the player is shown a yellow card

For further information, click [here](#).

OTHER OFFENCES

DEFINITION

Apart from fouls and handball, there are other offences that can result in a free kick (direct or indirect) being awarded and sometimes a red or yellow card being shown.

Many of these are technical offences, which are offences that are against the Laws of the Game rather than offences committed against an opponent.

DIRECT FREE KICK FOR...

- Entering or re-entering the pitch without the referee's permission and interfering with the game or an opponent

INDIRECT FREE KICK FOR...

- Offside offences
- Verbal offences, especially arguing, protesting, swearing, etc.
- Verbally distracting an opponent (usually to put them off when they are trying to play the ball)
- Simulation/diving/exaggeration to get:
 - > a free kick or penalty kick
 - > a red or yellow card for an opponent
- After taking a free kick, corner kick, goal kick, penalty kick, throw-in or kick-off, the player touches the ball again before another player (of either team) has touched it
- Entering, leaving or re-entering the pitch without the referee's permission but not interfering with the game or an opponent
- When an attacking team player is less than 1 m (1 yd) from a defensive 'wall' of three or more players when a free kick is taken
- If the goalkeeper:
 - > holds the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than six seconds
 - > touches the ball for a second time after releasing the ball, before it has touched another player (except after a save)
 - > touches the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a team-mate (backpass)
 - > touches the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) after receiving it directly from a throw-in by a team-mate
- Using a deliberate trick to flick the ball up and play it to the goalkeeper to get round the backpass Law
- Illegally marking the pitch
- Behaving unfairly (unsportingly)
- Showing a lack of respect for the game and its participants
- At a penalty kick:
 - > The kicker feints (pretends to kick the ball) at the end of their run-up, i.e. when their non-kicking/standing foot stops near the penalty spot
 - > An attacker enters the penalty area before the kick is taken and the kick is missed/saved
 - > The wrong player takes the kick
 - > The penalty is kicked backwards
- The referee plays advantage when a player should have been sent off (red card or second yellow card) and the offending player then gets involved in play
- A player commits an offence off the pitch against one of their own team-mates (including substitutes) or one of their own team officials

For further information, click [here](#).

OTHER MATCH (REFEREE) OFFICIALS

REQUIREMENTS

Depending on the level of the game, the referee may be helped by other people known as match officials. They are usually neutral and qualified officials, or, at the lower levels of the game, people prepared to help, e.g. each team might provide someone to be an assistant referee.

The other officials help the referee, but, according to the Laws, the referee is the only person who can make a decision.

ASSISTANT REFEREES

There are usually two assistant referees, who are on the touchline on diagonally opposite sides of the pitch. They move up and down the defending team's half of the touchline and keep in line with the second-last defender (including the goalkeeper).

The most important role of the assistant referees is to help the referee with:

- goal kicks, corner kicks and throw-ins (including by signalling that the ball went out of play)
- offsides

Neutral and qualified assistant referees may also help the referee with fouls and handball offences, especially if the referee cannot see an incident clearly.

Assistant referees may also help the referee in other areas, including:

- checking the pitch, goals and other equipment before the game
- when a substitution is being made
- keeping a record of goals, red and yellow cards, substitutions, etc.
- timekeeping
- monitoring the behaviour of the coaches, substitutes, substituted players and other team officials (if close to the benches/technical areas)

There are standard signals used by assistant referees:



Substitution



**Throw-in for
attacking team**



**Throw-in for
defending team**



Corner kick

continued

OTHER MATCH (REFEREE) OFFICIALS



Free kick for attacking team



Free kick for defending team



Goal kick



Offside



Offside on the near side of the field



Offside in the middle of the field



Offside on the far side of the field

FOURTH OFFICIAL

The fourth official stands in between the two benches/technical areas and helps the referee in various ways, including:

- checking the pitch, goals and other equipment before the game
- giving advice about fouls, handball offences or other incidents that the referee cannot see clearly
- checking a substitute's kit and making sure they enter the pitch at the halfway line, but only after the player being substituted has left the pitch and the referee has signalled for them to enter the pitch
- controlling the coaches, substitutes, substituted players and other team officials
- keeping a record of goals, red and yellow cards, substitutions, etc.
- indicating the minimum amount of additional time the referee has decided will be played at the end of each half

VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREES (VARs)

Some top-level competitions use the VAR system. This involves a qualified video assistant referee (VAR) helped by one or more qualified assistant VARs (AVARs) watching replays of major incidents to check if anything serious has been missed or the referee has made a 'clear and obvious error' (see: VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE (VAR) SYSTEM).

PENALTY AREA

DEFINITION

The penalty area (box) is the larger rectangular area of the pitch. Two boundary lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 16.5 m (18 yds) from the inside of the goalposts. These lines extend into the pitch for 16.5 m (18 yds) and are joined by a line running parallel with the goal line. A penalty spot is marked 11 m (12 yds) from the middle of the goal. A semi-circle line (penalty arc) is drawn outside the penalty area, 9.15 m (10 yds) from the penalty spot.

PENALTY KICK

DEFINITION

A penalty kick is awarded to the other team when a player commits a direct-free-kick offence (usually a foul or handball) inside their own penalty area. A goal can be scored directly from a penalty kick.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

All players, except for the goalkeeper and the kicker, must be outside the penalty area and the semi-circle line (penalty arc), which is 9.15 m (10 yds) from the penalty spot. They cannot go inside the penalty arc or penalty area until the ball is in play (i.e. the ball is kicked and clearly moves).

The ball must be on the penalty spot and stationary (not moving).

The goalkeeper:

- must face the ball
- must be on the goal line and between the goalposts
- can move along the goal line and/or jump up and down, as long as at least part of each foot is on or above the line, until the ball is kicked
- must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar or goal net
- must have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind the goal line when the ball is kicked

The kicker:

- must be clearly identified so the referee and the goalkeeper know who is taking the kick
- can stop and start during their run-up to the ball
- must not stop or feint (pretend to kick the ball) at the end of their run-up – they must kick it immediately
- must kick the ball forward (but can backheel it towards the goal)
- cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it

The referee:

- checks the ball is on the penalty spot and makes sure all players are in the correct position
- blows the whistle for the kick to be taken
- carefully watches the kicker and the goalkeeper (the assistant referee will usually help by watching the goalkeeper and checking whether the ball crosses the goal line in the goal)
- allows the kick to be taken even if time is up at the end of the half

If the half is extended to allow a penalty kick to be taken, the half ends after the kick has been taken and when:

- the referee stops play for an offence committed by the attacking team
- the ball:
 - > goes into the goal
 - > stops moving (including being held by the goalkeeper)
 - > rebounds off the goalkeeper, a goalpost, the crossbar or the corner flagpost and has no chance of going into the goal
 - > goes out of play
 - > is touched after the kick by any player (except the defending goalkeeper)

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball is moving or is not on the penalty spot when the kick is taken?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

continued

PENALTY KICK

any defenders enter the penalty arc or penalty area early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

any attackers enter the penalty arc or penalty area early?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: An indirect free kick is awarded.

attacker(s) and defender(s) enter the penalty arc or penalty area early?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

the goalkeeper moves off the goal line early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken if it is saved.

The kick is not retaken if the ball misses or rebounds from the goal and the kicker was not affected by the goalkeeper's movement.

If the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper must be warned for the first offence in the game and shown a yellow card for any further offences in the game.

the kicker feints at the end of the run-up and kicks the ball?

Kick scored: An indirect free kick is awarded and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

Kick missed/saved: An indirect free kick is awarded and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

the kicker feints at the end of the run-up and does not kick the ball?

The kicker is shown a yellow card and the kick must then be taken.

the kicker stops during the run-up, starts again and kicks the ball?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The game carries on or, if the ball goes out of play, a goal kick or corner kick is awarded.

continued

PENALTY KICK

the kicker touches the ball again before anyone else?

Kick scored: An indirect free kick is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: An indirect free kick is awarded.

the kicker does not kick the ball forward?

Kick scored: An indirect free kick is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: An indirect free kick is awarded.

the kicker and the goalkeeper both commit an offence?

Kick scored: An indirect free kick is awarded and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

Kick missed/saved: An indirect free kick is awarded and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

another player (not the identified kicker) takes the kick?

Kick scored: An indirect free kick is awarded and the player who took the kick is shown a yellow card.

Kick missed/saved: An indirect free kick is awarded and the player who took the kick is shown a yellow card.

the ball bursts/stops before reaching the goal/goalkeeper?

Kick scored: The kick must be taken.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be taken.

there is outside interference with the ball before it reaches the goal?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken unless it is deemed that the goalkeeper could not have saved it.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

For further information, click [here](#).

PENALTIES / *PENALTY SHOOT-OUT*

DEFINITION

Penalties occur after a match has ended (with or without extra time, depending on competition rules) and the scores are level and a winning team is needed.

PROCEDURE

The teams take alternate kicks. Players cannot take another kick until all their team-mates have taken one.

If a player is not ready to take a kick (e.g. they are off the pitch), another player, who has not taken a kick, must take the kick.

Each team takes up to five kicks. If one team scores more goals than the other team could score, even if they scored with all their remaining kicks their five kicks, they are the winners.

If the scores are level after each team has taken five kicks, the penalties continue into 'sudden death', where kicks are taken alternately until one team has scored more than the other team after the same number of kicks.

If all the players have taken a kick and the scores are still level, a second round starts – the teams can change the order of kickers for this round.

If the kicker commits an offence, their kick is recorded as missed (whether or not they score).

Yellow cards and warnings from the game are not carried forward into penalties but a player who was shown a red card during the game cannot take part.

Players, substitutes, substituted players and team officials can get a red or yellow card during penalties.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Before the kicks start

Only players who are playing at the end of the game (including those who are off the pitch injured, changing boots, etc.) are allowed to take part.

Everyone else (substitutes, team officials, etc.) must be off the pitch.

If one team has more players than the other team (e.g. a player was sent off or injured), they must reduce their team to the same number of kickers, and the referee must be told which player(s) is/are not taking part.

The referee:

- tosses a coin to decide which goal to use (unless one goal cannot be used, e.g. lots of water on the pitch, security reasons, etc.)
- tosses the coin again and the winning captain chooses whether to kick first or second

No substitutions are allowed except for a goalkeeper who is ill/injured.

A goalkeeper who is ill/injured before or during penalties can be substituted if their team has not used all their substitutes or they have a player who was excluded to make the number of players in each team equal. If there are no excluded players and all the substitutes have been used, one of the on-field players must replace the goalkeeper.

The teams do not have to tell the referee the order of the kickers.

During the kicks

All players except for the two goalkeepers and the kicker must be in the centre circle.

The ball must be on the penalty spot and not moving.

continued

PENALTIES / PENALTY SHOOT-OUT

The goalkeeper:

- must face the ball
- must be on the goal line and between the goalposts
- can move along the goal line and/or jump up and down, as long as at least part of each foot is on or above the line, until the ball is kicked
- must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar or goal net
- must have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind the goal line when the ball is kicked

The other goalkeeper must wait on the junction of the goal line and the penalty area line (on the same side as the assistant referee, if there is one).

Any of the on-field players may change places with the goalkeeper, as long as the referee is informed.

The kicker:

- must be clearly identified
- can stop and start during their run-up to the ball
- must not stop or feint (pretend to kick the ball) at the end of their run-up – they must kick it immediately
- must kick the ball forward (but can backheel it towards the goal)
- cannot touch the ball again

The referee:

- checks the ball is on the penalty spot and makes sure all players are in the correct position
- blows the whistle for the kick to be taken
- carefully watches the kicker and the goalkeeper (the assistant referee will usually help by watching the goalkeeper and checking whether the ball crosses the goal line)
- keeps a record of each kicker (name and/or number), as well as who scores and who misses

The kick is completed when the ball stops moving, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any offence.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball is moving or is not on the penalty spot when the kick is taken?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

the goalkeeper moves off the goal line early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken if it is saved. The kick is not retaken if it misses the goal and the kick was not affected by the goalkeeper's movement. If the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper must be warned for the first offence and shown a yellow card for any further offences.

the kicker feints at the end of the run-up?

Kick scored: The kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

continued

PENALTIES / PENALTY SHOOT-OUT

the kicker stops during the run-up, starts again and kicks the ball?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed.

the kicker stops and does not kick the ball?

The kick must be (re)taken.

the kicker touches the ball again before anyone else?

Kick scored: The kick is recorded as missed.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed.

the kicker does not kick the ball forward?

Kick scored: The kick is recorded as missed.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed.

the kicker and the goalkeeper both commit an offence?

Kick scored: The kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

the ball bursts/stops before reaching the goal/goalkeeper?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

there is outside interference with the ball before it reaches the goal?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken unless the goalkeeper could not have saved it.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

For further information, click [here](#).

PITCH / FIELD OF PLAY

REQUIREMENTS

The pitch must be rectangular and marked with clear, unbroken lines, which are usually white but can be another colour.

All lines on the pitch are part of the area they enclose, e.g. if a foul/handball is committed by a defender on the penalty area line, it is considered to have occurred inside the penalty area and a penalty kick is awarded.

All lines must be of the same width, which must not be more than 12 cm (5 in).

The longer lines on the side of the pitch are the touchlines.

The shorter lines at the end of the pitch are the goal lines.

In adults' football, the dimensions are:

- **Touchline:** 90 to 120 m (100 to 130 yds)
- **Goal line:** 45 to 90 m (50 to 100 yds)

For dimensions for international games, click [here](#).

The pitch is divided into two equal halves by a halfway line. There is a centre spot at the midpoint of the halfway line and a centre circle with a radius of 9.15 m (10 yds) marked around it. The pitch dimensions for youth/children's football may be smaller.

No advertising is allowed on the pitch (including inside the goals, technical areas and the VAR referee review area (RRA)) at any time during a game.

A player who makes unauthorised marks on the pitch must be shown a yellow card.

*Also see Corner Area and Flags, Goal Area, Penalty Area, Referee Review Area (RRA), Technical Area.

PLAYERS & SUBSTITUTES

REQUIREMENTS

The game is played by two teams of no more than 11 players each. One of the players must be a goalkeeper.

A game cannot start or continue if a team has fewer than seven players.

A team list with the names of all the players and substitutes (and sometimes team officials) is usually given to the referee before kick-off. If the competition rules do not require a team list, the referee must be given the names of the substitutes before kick-off. Substitutes are extra players who may replace team-mates during a game (see: Substitutions).

An outfield player may change places with the goalkeeper, as long as the referee is informed before the change is made and the change occurs when the game has been stopped by the referee.

Each team has a captain, who usually wears an armband and who should help the referee wherever possible with their team's behaviour (see: Captains).

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a team has fewer than 11 (but more than 7) players before the game starts?

Any player arriving after kick-off may play, as long as their name was on the team list given to the referee before the game.

a team is reduced to fewer than seven players during the game (e.g. because of red cards and/or injuries)?

The game must be abandoned and the referee must submit a report after the game to the competition organisers.

a team has too many players on the pitch?

The referee must stop the game, reduce the team to the correct number and submit a report after the game to the competition organisers.

a team has too many players on the pitch and scores a goal?

The extra player must be removed from the pitch and, if the player interfered with the game:

- if the game has not restarted, the goal is disallowed, and play is restarted with a direct free kick to the other team from the position of the extra player
- if the game has restarted, the goal is allowed, play continues, and the matter is reported to the competition organisers after the game

See also: 'Substitutes or team officials on the pitch'

a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission (except at half-time or the break before the start of extra time or penalties)?

- Play continues
- Both players are shown a yellow card the next time the game stops

For further information, click [here](#).

PLAYERS' KIT

REQUIREMENTS

Players must not wear or use anything that is dangerous to themselves or anyone else. Some things are compulsory, others are optional.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

The teams must wear different kit coloured shirt (especially shirts and socks) which should also be different from the referee's kit.

Each goalkeeper must wear a different colour from the other players of both teams, the referee and other match officials and, ideally, the other team's goalkeeper (see: Goalkeepers).

All players must wear:

- a shirt with long or short sleeves
- shorts
- socks (if tape is used, it must be the same colour as the part of the sock it is covering)
- shinguards (shin pads)
- footwear (football boots are not compulsory)

Players can also wear:

- undershirts, as long as the sleeves are the same colour or have the same pattern as the shirt sleeves or cuffs (end part of the sleeve)
- undershorts, which must be the same colour as the shorts or their trim (lowest part of the shorts)
- other equipment, e.g. caps (for goalkeepers), sports spectacles and protectors (knee, head, etc.) can be worn, as long as they are not dangerous and are made of soft material
- head covers, which must not be dangerous or attached to the shirt
- fitness or data trackers (not on the wrist)

Players and match officials are not allowed to wear any kind of jewellery, e.g. rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, etc. All jewellery must be removed. Using tape to cover jewellery is not allowed.

The match officials inspect the players' equipment before the game begins and the substitutes' equipment before they enter the pitch. If a player is wearing jewellery or dangerous equipment, the referee must tell the player to remove the item.

Players, substitutes and team officials are not allowed to wear (or reveal) anything that has political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images. This includes anything that could be considered to be offensive, insulting, abusive, provocative or discriminatory. Any such item should be removed. A yellow card is not shown, but a report must be sent to the appropriate competition organisers after the game.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

both teams have the same colour shirt as each other and no other colour is available?

The game cannot take place – competition rules usually state which team must change if there is a clash of colours.

both teams have the same colour socks as each other and no other colour is available?

The referee may decide to allow the game to take place.

continued

PLAYERS' KIT

both teams have the same colour shorts as each other and no other colour is available?

The game can take place.

both goalkeepers have the same colour kit as each other and no other colour is available?

The game can take place.

one or both goalkeepers have the same colour kit as the referee and no other colour is available?

The game can take place.

clothing/equipment has blood on it?

The clothing/equipment must be changed.

a player is wearing incorrect equipment (e.g. jewellery) before the kick-off?

The incorrect equipment must be removed before they can play.

a player is wearing incorrect equipment (e.g. jewellery) during the game?

The player must leave the pitch and remove the incorrect equipment (it is not necessary to stop play). Once the equipment has been removed and the player has been checked by a match official, the player must wait for a signal from the referee before coming back onto the pitch. If they come back without permission, they are shown a yellow card and an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team (or a direct free kick or penalty kick if they interfere with the game).

a player accidentally loses their footwear or shinguard (shin pad)?

The player can continue playing and can score. The footwear/shinguard (shin pad) must be replaced as soon as possible and no later than the next time the game stops.

For further information, click [here](#).

PLAYING DISTANCE

DEFINITION

Playing distance refers to when a player can touch the ball if they stretch their foot/leg or jump. For a goalkeeper, it includes how far they can stretch their hand(s)/arm(s).

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN

A player can use their body to shield the ball from an opponent if the ball is within playing distance and they do not use their hand/arm to hold off the opponent.

If the ball is within playing distance, a player can be fairly charged (shoulder-to-shoulder) by an opponent.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player uses their body to shield the ball or block an opponent when the ball is not within playing distance?

An indirect free kick is awarded if there is no contact; a direct free kick is awarded if there is contact.

a player impedes an opponent's progress by blocking, obstructing, slowing down or forcing a change of direction when the ball is not within playing distance?

An indirect free kick is awarded if there is no contact; a direct free kick is awarded if there is contact.

For further information, click [here](#).

PLAYING TIMES

REQUIREMENTS

All games last for two equal halves of 45 minutes. At lower levels, especially in youth/children's football, the halves may be shorter. Both halves must be the same length.

Where teams want to have shorter halves (because of fading light, a late kick-off, etc.), both teams and the referee must agree on how long the two halves will last before the game starts. The change must be in accordance with competition rules and should be reported to the competition organisers after the game.

The half-time break lasts for 15 minutes, although it may be shorter at lower levels, especially in youth/children's football. The half-time interval can only be cancelled with the agreement of all players and the referee.

If the match is a draw at the end of normal time in a game that requires a winner, the competition rules will state if the game will:

- be decided by away goals
- go straight to penalties
- go to extra time (two equal halves, usually 15 minutes each, with a half-time break)
- go to penalties if the game is still drawn after extra time

There is a break before the start of extra time and before penalties.

At the end of each half (in normal time and extra time), the referee must add on all time lost through stoppages (additional time), in particular:

- substitutions
- injuries
- wasting time
- goal celebrations
- red and yellow cards
- drinks and cooling breaks
- delays for VAR checks and reviews
- other major delays, e.g. pitch invasion, floodlight failure, etc.

The fourth official (if there is one) uses the substitution board to show the amount of additional time decided by the referee. If there is no fourth official/substitution board, the referee should indicate the amount of additional time, usually with their fingers.

The referee:

- cannot reduce additional time once it has been decided
- must increase the additional time for any further time 'lost' through stoppages during the additional time itself

If a penalty kick is awarded at the end of a half, time must be allowed for the penalty kick to be taken. (see: Penalty kick)

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the referee blows the whistle too early at the end of a half but realises their mistake while still on the pitch?

The referee must resume the game and play the correct time.

continued

PLAYING TIMES

the referee blows the whistle too early at the end of a half and does not realise their mistake until after they have left the pitch for the half-time interval?

The referee must resume the game after the half-time interval without changing sides and play the correct time of the first half. The teams then change sides, and the game is restarted with the kick-off for the second half.

the playing conditions are not very good, and the half-time interval needs to be shortened in order to complete the game?

This is allowed if both teams and the referee agree.

a match goes to extra time?

The same principles apply as in normal time (both halves are the same duration, there is a half-time break and the referee allows additional time at the end of each half).

the half is extended for a penalty kick to be taken or retaken?

The half ends when the referee stops play for an offence by the attacking team or when the ball:

- goes into the goal
- stops moving (including being held by the goalkeeper)
- rebounds off the goalkeeper, goalpost(s), crossbar or corner flagpost and has no chance of going into the goal
- goes out of play
- is touched after the kick by any player (except the defending goalkeeper)

For further information, click [here](#).

RED CARDS

DEFINITION

A red card is shown to someone when they are sent off. Red cards can be shown for offences by players, substitutes, substituted players, coaches and other team officials.

WHEN IT IS SHOWN

A person can be sent off from the time the referee goes onto the pitch for the pre-match inspection until the referee leaves the pitch after the end of the game, including during half-time, the break before extra time, extra time, half-time of extra time and penalties.

If a player commits a red-card offence before entering the pitch to start the game, no red card is shown but the player cannot play in the game and the incident is reported to the competition organisers after the game.

If the offence is committed:

- before the team lists are submitted – the player cannot be included on the team list and cannot take part in the game
- between the submission of the team lists and the kick-off – the player can be replaced by one of the substitutes, so the team starts with 11 players. However, the substitute cannot be replaced but the team does not lose a substitution

A red card is shown if a player, substitute or substituted player:

- denies the other team a goal or obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing:
 - > handball (except for a goalkeeper in their own penalty area)
 - > a foul (except when a penalty kick is awarded for a foul that was an attempt to play the ball or challenge an opponent for the ball, in which case a yellow card is shown)
 - > any other offence
- commits serious foul play (serious/dangerous foul)
- is guilty of violent conduct (punching, kicking, head-butting, etc.)
- spits at or bites someone
- uses language or behaves in a way that is offensive, insulting or abusive
- receives a second yellow card in the same game

A red card is shown if a team official:

- delays the other team's restart of the game, e.g. by holding onto the ball, kicking it away or obstructing an opponent
- leaves their bench/technical area or enters the pitch to argue with the referee or other match official
- acts aggressively or interferes with the game or a player from the other team
- enters the other team's bench/technical area and behaves aggressively
- is guilty of violent conduct (punching, kicking, head-butting, etc.)
- spits at or bites someone
- throws/kicks something onto the pitch
- uses language or behaves in a way that is offensive, insulting or abusive
- receives a second yellow card in the same game
- incorrectly uses electronic/communication equipment and behaves inappropriately as a result

If someone on the bench/in the technical area commits a red-card offence and cannot be identified, the head coach must be shown the red card (as the leader of the team and the person responsible for the people on the bench/in the technical area).

Red cards must be shown during a stoppage in the game and not while the ball is in play.

If the referee plays advantage following a red card offence that denies the opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO), a yellow card is shown instead of a red card, as the advantage allowed the attack to continue.

continued

RED CARDS

If the referee plays advantage following any other red card offence (which should not usually happen because of the risk of confrontation):

- the red card must be shown when the game next stops or
- if the offender gets involved with the game again, the referee must stop play, award an indirect free kick and send the player off

When a person is sent off, they must leave the surrounds of the pitch (including the bench/technical area) and go straight to the dressing room.

Details about all red cards must be reported after the game to the competition organisers.

For further information, click [here](#).

REFEREE

REQUIREMENTS

Every game must have a referee who controls the game, players and team officials by applying the Laws. The referee's decision is final and must always be respected.

The referee has the authority to award free kicks and penalty kicks and to decide which team gets a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick or dropped ball.

The referee's main responsibility is to use the Laws to make sure the game is played fairly and safely.

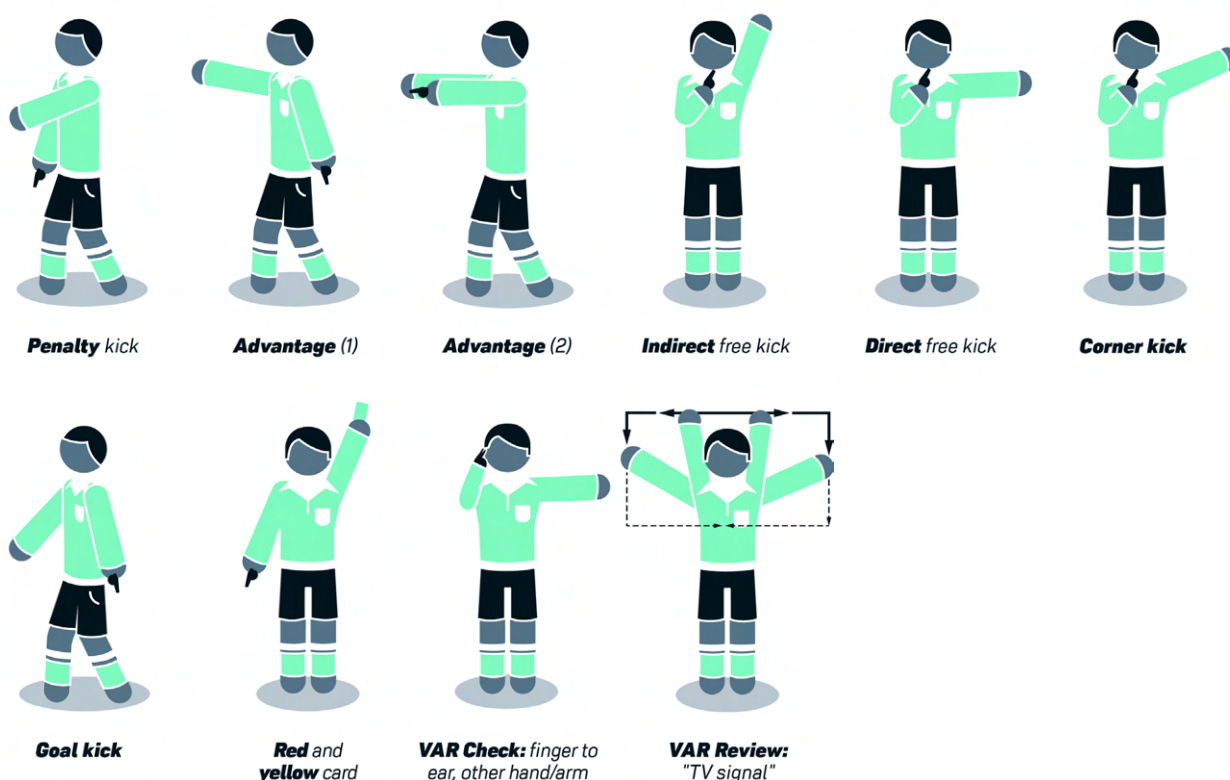
When applying the Laws, the referee must consider the 'spirit' of the Law i.e. what is the main purpose of the Law and what is the fairest outcome, especially where something happens that is not directly covered by the Laws?

The referee controls the game and may show a red or yellow card for some offences (see: Red cards and Yellow cards).

In some lower-level competitions, a yellow card results in a temporary dismissal with the player spending some time off the pitch (in the sin bin) before returning to the game.

The referee must keep a record of the main events in the game, particularly the goals, substitutions and red and yellow cards.

There are standard signals used by referees.



The whistle is used to stop the game, usually for a foul, handball, offside, injury or to signal that the ball has gone out of play when it is not clear. It is usually only used to restart the game for important situations, e.g. after a goal, red or yellow card, injury or substitution, or for an attacking free kick or penalty kick.

If the referee becomes ill or injured and cannot continue, the game is abandoned unless the competition rules allow one of the other match officials (assistant referees or fourth official) to take over.

For further information, click [here](#).

REFEREE REVIEW AREA (RRA)

DEFINITION

Where the video assistant referee (VAR) system is being used, the referee review area (RRA) is marked outside the pitch, usually near the halfway line. The RRA is for 'on-field reviews', where the referee watches the replays provided by the VAR.

For further information, click [here](#).

SCORING A GOAL

DEFINITION

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball crosses the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar and no offence has been committed by the attacking team.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a small part of the ball has not crossed the goal line?

A goal is not awarded.

an attacking team player commits an offence (e.g. handball, foul, offside) before the ball crosses the goal line?

The goal is disallowed.

the referee awards a goal and then finds out (e.g. from an assistant referee, 4th official or the VAR) that an offence was committed by the attacking team before the ball crossed the goal line?

If the game has not restarted, the goal is disallowed.

If the game has restarted, the goal stands, and the matter is reported to the competition organisers after the game.

a defending team player commits an offence (e.g. handball, foul) before the ball crosses the goal line?

The referee does not penalise the offence but plays advantage and the goal is awarded.

For further information, click [here](#).

SEMI-AUTOMATED OFFSIDE TECHNOLOGY (SAOT)

DEFINITION

Semi-automated offside technology is a support tool for the video match officials and the on-field officials to help them make faster and more accurate offside decisions.

HOW IT WORKS

The technology uses dedicated tracking cameras mounted in the stadium to track the ball and data points on each individual player, many times per second, calculating their exact position on the pitch. The collected data points include all limbs and extremities that are relevant to determine if a player is in an offside position.

For further information, click [here](#).

SIMULATION

DEFINITION

Simulation is when a player tries to deceive the referee by faking or exaggerating an action to get:

- a free kick or penalty kick
- a red or yellow card for an opponent

SIMULATION EXAMPLES

A player can be guilty of simulation in a number of ways, including:

- pretending to have been:
 - > fouled, to get a free kick or penalty kick
 - > kicked, punched, etc. to get a red or yellow card for an opponent
- exaggerating:
 - > the seriousness of a foul
 - > the strength/effect of a kick, push, etc.
- holding the wrong part of the body after an incident (such as a foul, push, etc.), for example:
 - > holding the knee when the foul was on the ankle
 - > holding the head/face after being pushed in the chest

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player is guilty of simulation?

- an indirect free kick is awarded (if play is stopped for the offence)
- the player is shown a yellow card

For further information, click [here](#).

SUBSTITUTIONS

DEFINITION

Substitutes are extra players who may replace team-mates during a game.

Competition rules:

- determine how many substitutes a team can:
 - > name on the team list
 - > use during a game
- may allow each team to use one additional substitute in extra time

At lower levels, some competitions allow rolling/return substitutes, which means a player who has been substituted can return to the game.

In all top-level competitions, each team has a maximum of three opportunities to make a substitution (excluding during half-time, the period between full-time and the start of extra time, and at half-time in extra time). An additional substitution opportunity may be allowed during extra time. Other competitions may also decide to apply these restrictions.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

- The names of the substitutes must be given to the referee before the game starts
- A substitution can only occur when the game is stopped and with the referee's permission
- The player being substituted must:
 - > leave the pitch at the nearest point on the boundary line or quickly at the halfway line, unless already off the pitch
 - > go straight to the bench/technical area or the dressing room and remain off the pitch
- The substitute must only enter the pitch:
 - > after receiving the referee's signal
 - > after the substituted player has left the pitch
 - > at the halfway line
- Once the substituted player has left the pitch and the substitute has come on, the substitution is over and cannot be changed (except in the case of rolling/return substitutes)

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

someone whose name was not given to the referee before the kick-off wants to play?

They cannot take part in the game.

the player being substituted will not leave the pitch?

The game carries on.

a player leaves the pitch at the wrong place to waste time?

The player is shown a yellow card.

continued

SUBSTITUTIONS

the substitute enters the pitch before the player being substituted has left the pitch?

The substitute must go back and wait for the correct time to enter (no card is shown).

a substitution occurs without the referee's permission (except at half-time)?

Both players are shown a yellow card.

a substitution is made during half-time but the referee is not informed?

The substitute may continue to play, no card is shown, and the matter is reported to the competition organisers.

a team tries to use too many substitutes?

This must be prevented by the referee.

the referee mistakenly allows too many substitutions to be made?

As soon as this is noticed, it must be corrected and reported to the competition organisers after the game.

a substitute or substituted player interferes with the game?

A direct free kick or penalty kick is awarded, and a red or yellow card is shown (see: Red cards and Yellow cards).

SUBSTITUTES OR TEAM OFFICIALS ON THE PITCH

DEFINITION

Substitutes, substituted players and team officials (including coaches, doctors, physios, etc.) are not allowed onto the pitch without the referee's permission.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Substitutes, substituted players and team officials must remain on the bench/in the technical area (if there is one).

If there is no technical area, they must stay on the side of the pitch outside the touchline.

They may only go onto the pitch after getting a signal from the referee (except in an emergency, e.g. serious injury).

A player who has gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, etc. must wait for the referee's signal to return, which can be given whilst the ball is in play.

If the game is stopped, the player can return to the pitch from the goal line or touchline, but if the ball is in play, the player can only return to the pitch from the touchline.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a substitute, substituted player or player who has gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, etc. enters the pitch without permission?

If there is no interference with the game:

- the referee can allow the game to continue
- when the game stops, the offending person is:
 - > shown a yellow card for entering the pitch without permission
 - > required to leave the pitch (if they are a substitute or substituted player)

If there is interference with the game:

- the referee stops play (unless an advantage can be played) and awards a direct free kick (or penalty kick if the interference is in the offending player's penalty area) and the offending person is:
 - > shown a yellow card for entering the pitch without permission, if they are a player
 - > shown a second yellow card and then a red card if they have committed another offence, e.g. a reckless tackle or arguing with the referee
 - > shown a red card if they have committed a sending-off offence (e.g. violent conduct, serious foul play, denying the other team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity)
 - > required to leave the pitch (if they are a substitute or substituted player)

a team official enters the pitch and there is interference with the game:

- the referee stops play (unless an advantage can be played) and awards a direct free kick (or penalty kick if the interference is in the penalty area of the offending team official) and the person is:
 - > shown a red card for entering the pitch without permission >> continues next page

continued

SUBSTITUTES OR TEAM OFFICIALS ON THE PITCH

> required to leave the pitch and the surrounding area for the rest of the game

Exception:

If a substitute, substituted player, team official or player who has gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, etc. enters the pitch without permission and interferes with the ball when it is going into their team's goal but it still goes in, the goal can be awarded if the interference did not stop a defender or the goalkeeper from playing the ball.

a team scores a goal when one of their substitutes, substituted players, team officials or players who have gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, etc. is on the pitch without permission, interferes with the game and the referee finds out before the game is restarted?

The referee must:

- disallow the goal
- take the correct disciplinary action (player, substitute, substituted player – yellow card; team official – red card)
- have the person removed from the pitch (substitute, substituted player, team official)
- restart play with a direct free kick from where the offending person was discovered by the referee

If the referee does not find out about the offending person until after the game has restarted, the referee must:

- allow the goal
- stop play (if the ball is in play)
- take the correct disciplinary action (player, substitute, substituted player – yellow card; team official – red card)
- have the person removed from the pitch (substitute, substituted player, team official)
- restart the game with a dropped ball or free kick (depending on the reason for stopping the game)
- submit a report to the competition organisers after the game

For further information, click [here](#).

SWEARING / *OFFENSIVE, INSULTING OR ABUSIVE LANGUAGE AND/OR ACTIONS*

DEFINITION

Language and/or actions that are offensive, insulting or abusive must result in the offender being shown a red card.

Language and/or behaviour that is discriminatory must be dealt with as offensive, insulting or abusive.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

If a player swears, the referee must decide if the words are:

- offensive, insulting or abusive = red card
- unsporting behaviour = yellow card
- acceptable = warning and no card

A player must be shown a red card if they:

- use offensive, insulting or abusive language
- make an obscene gesture
- behave or act in a violent or offensive way

TECHNICAL AREA

REQUIREMENTS

Team officials, substitutes and substituted players are not allowed on the pitch without the referee's permission. Each team usually has their own separate (technical) area, just outside the touchline.

At many levels of football, these areas are not marked – they are often called 'benches'.

At higher levels of football, where these areas are marked out, they are called 'technical areas', and there are some specific requirements:

- the area must be at least 1 m (1 yd) from the touchline
- the area should not extend more than 1 m (1 yd) either side of the seating area
- competition rules will state how many people are allowed in the technical area (competition rules usually require them to be named on the team list)
- people in the technical area must behave responsibly. If they do not, they may be shown a red or yellow card
- only one person from each team is allowed to stand and coach at any one time

TEMPORARY DISMISSALS / SIN BINS

DEFINITION

Youth/children's, veterans, disability and grassroots football are allowed to have sin bins (temporary dismissals), where a player who gets a yellow card is sent off for a short period of time (as defined in the competition rules, e.g. 5-10 minutes).

Competition rules will determine whether to have sin bins for all yellow cards or only for specific yellow card offences, e.g. dissent only.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

- When a player commits a sin-bin offence, the referee shows a yellow card and points with both arms to the benches/technical areas to indicate that the player must leave the pitch.
- The player leaves the pitch and stays off it (on the bench/in the technical area or with the team officials) until the sin-bin time is up and there is a signal from the referee to return. The signal can be given when the ball is in play.
- The sin-bin time starts when the game restarts, after the player has left the pitch.
- If there is a stoppage in play during the sin-bin time, this time is added to the sin-bin time.
- A player who has been in the sin bin once and then commits another sin-bin offence later in the game is sent to the sin bin again. At the end of their second sin bin time, they cannot return to the game, but they can be substituted (if the team has not used all its substitutions).
- In competitions where not all yellow cards result in a sin bin, a player who gets a normal yellow card and a sin bin yellow card is not sent off for two yellow cards.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

a player commits an offence when in the sin bin (e.g. argues about a decision)?

The player is shown a red or yellow card (depending on the offence) and is not allowed to return to the game when the sin-bin time is up.

a player is in the sin bin at the end of the first half?

The player spends the remaining time in the sin bin at the start of the second half.

a player is in the sin bin at the end of the game and there is extra time?

The player spends the remaining time in the sin bin at the start of extra time.

a player is in the sin bin at the end of the game and there are penalties?

The player can take part in the penalties.

For further information, click [here](#).

THROW-IN

DEFINITION

A throw-in is awarded when the whole of the ball goes out over the touchline, on the ground or in the air.

A throw-in is awarded to the opponents of the last player to touch the ball.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?

Any player, including a goalkeeper, can take a throw-in.

A substitute who has replaced another player but not yet entered the pitch, or a player who had left the pitch due to an injury or to change kit, etc. can take the throw-in, as long as part of one of their feet touches the touchline before they take the throw-in, as this means they have satisfied the Law requirement to enter the pitch.

The thrower must:

- take the throw-in from the point on the touchline where the ball went out of play
- stand and face the pitch
- have part of each foot on or behind the touchline
- throw the ball with both hands
- throw the ball from behind and over the top of their head
- not touch the ball again until another player has touched it

The players of the other team must be at least 2 m (2 yds) away from the point on the touchline where the throw-in is to be taken.

The ball is in play when it enters the pitch.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...

the ball does not go onto the pitch?

The same team takes the throw-in again (it does not have to be taken by the same player).

the throw-in is taken from the wrong place?

The other team takes the throw-in.

the thrower lifts one/both feet off the ground?

The other team takes the throw-in.

the thrower has part of one foot/both feet on the pitch?

No offence has been committed, as long as part of each foot is on or behind the touchline.

continued

THROW-IN

the thrower does not use two hands?

The other team takes the throw-in.

the thrower does not throw the ball over their head?

The other team takes the throw-in.

the thrower touches the ball again before another player has touched it?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the thrower was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

A yellow card is shown to the offending player if the second touch stopped a promising attack.

A red card is shown to the offending player if the second touch denied the opponents an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

an opponent is not 2 m (2 yds) from the thrower when the throw-in is taken?

An indirect free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown if this interferes with the throw-in.

an opponent unfairly distracts the thrower?

An indirect free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown if this interferes with the throw-in.

the ball is thrown straight into the other team's goal?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball is thrown straight into thrower's goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the wrong team takes the throw-in?

The throw-in must be retaken by the correct team.

if a player taking a throw-in throws the ball against an opponent but not in a reckless or excessive force manner to regain possession of the ball?

Play continues as there is no offence.

For further information, click [here](#).

VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE (VAR) SYSTEM

DEFINITION

Some top-level competitions use the VAR system, which involves a qualified video assistant referee (VAR) watching replays of major incidents to check if anything serious has been missed or the referee has made a 'clear and obvious error'.

HOW IT WORKS

The VAR can only check incidents relating to:

- a goal/no goal decision
- a penalty kick/no penalty kick decision
- a direct red card (second yellow cards cannot be checked)
- mistaken identity (when the wrong player is shown a red or yellow card)

In principle, the original decision stands unless it is clearly wrong. However, if the VAR believes a 'clear and obvious error' has been made or something serious has been missed, the referee is informed through the communication headset and then makes a 'TV signal' to indicate that an incident is being reviewed.

If the incident is factual (e.g. offside position or if a foul occurred inside or outside the penalty area) the referee can correct an error without looking at the replays, based on information from the VAR – this is a 'VAR only review' (VARO).

If the incident involves judgement (e.g. is a foul serious enough for a red card or is there is a handball offence?) the referee will go to the referee review area (RRA) on the side of the pitch to look at the video replays on a monitor – this is an 'on-field review' (OFR). After watching the replays, often at different speeds and angles, the referee will either confirm or change the original decision.

For further information, click [here](#).

WINNING TEAM

DEFINITION

The team that scores more goals than the other team is the winner of the game.

When no goals are scored or both teams score the same number of goals, it is a draw.

Competition rules will determine how many points are awarded for a win or a draw.

If a game (or two-legged cup tie) is drawn and a winner is needed, the competition rules will state that the winning team is decided by using one or a combination of:

- extra time
- penalties (penalty shoot-out)
- the away goals rule (goals scored away from home count 'double')

For further information, click [here](#).

YELLOW CARDS

DEFINITION

A yellow card is a card shown to someone when they are booked/cautioned. Yellow cards can be shown for offences by players, substitutes, substituted players, coaches and other team officials.

WHEN IT IS SHOWN

A person can be shown a yellow card from the time the referee goes onto the pitch to start the game until after the end of the game, including during half-time, the break before extra time, extra time, half-time of extra time and penalties.

If a player commits a yellow card offence between the referee going onto the pitch for the pre-match inspection and the referee entering the pitch to start the game, no yellow card is shown. The incident is reported to the competition organisers after the game, but the player starts the game without a yellow card. This means that if they are shown a yellow card during the game, they are not sent off for two yellow cards in the same game.

In some competitions, a yellow card may result in the player being sent off for a short period of time and then returning to play (see: Sin bins (temporary dismissals)).

There are different reasons for the referee to show a yellow card, and many of them are officially categorised as 'unsporting behaviour'.

The most common yellow-card offences are where a player, substitute or substituted player:

- commits a reckless challenge (foul)
- wastes time
- stops a promising attack by the other team, usually by committing a foul or handball (there is no card issued if a penalty kick is awarded for a foul that stops a promising attack and was an attempt to play the ball)
- denies the other team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick for a foul that was an attempt to play the ball or challenge the ball
- argues with the referee or another match official (verbally or by gestures/actions)
- is not the minimum required distance at a free kick, corner kick, dropped ball or throw-in
- continuously fouls (no specific number of fouls have to be committed)
- simulates/dives to get a penalty/free kick or exaggerates to get another player a red or yellow card
- excessively celebrates a goal, e.g. takes their shirt off, jumps onto a fence, goes into the crowd, mocks opponents, wears a mask/covers their face with their shirt

Other reasons for a yellow card to be shown are if a player, substitute or substituted player:

- shows a lack of respect for the game or their opponents
- tries to score a goal with their hand/arm (even if unsuccessful)
- enters, re-enters or leaves the pitch without the referee's permission
- changes places with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission
- makes illegal marks on the pitch
- plays the ball after being given permission by the referee to leave the pitch
- uses a trick to get round the backpass Law to flick the ball up to the goalkeeper
- verbally distracts an opponent

A yellow card is shown to a team official who:

- continuously leaves their bench/technical area
- delays the restart of play by their team
- enters the other team's technical area (without any major confrontation)
- argues with the referee or other match official (without leaving the technical area)
- continuously signals for a red or yellow card to be shown to someone

continued

YELLOW CARDS

- excessively shows the VAR review 'TV signal'
- acts in a confrontational manner
- continually behaves unacceptably
- shows a lack of respect for the game or their opponents

If someone on the bench/in the technical area commits a yellow card offence and cannot be identified, the head coach must be shown the yellow card (as the leader of the team and the person responsible for the people on the bench/in the technical area).

Yellow cards must be shown during a stoppage in the game and not while the ball is in play.

If the referee plays advantage for a yellow-card offence, the card must be shown when the game next stops. However, if the offence was stopping a promising attack (SPA), no card is shown, as the advantage allowed the promising attack to continue.

Details about all yellow cards must be reported after the game to the competition organisers.

For further information, click [here](#).



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