



AYSO

Basic Soccer Rules

For New AYSO Parents and Volunteers

The AYSO National Support & Training Center
12501 South Isis Avenue
Hawthorne, CA 90250
TEL: 800.872.2976
FAX: 310.643.5310
Web site: www.ayso.org
E-mail: registration@ayso.org

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Introduction

Welcome to the AYSO family. Your participation is greatly appreciated. This booklet is intended as an introduction for those new to AYSO and new to the game of soccer. As a novice spectator or new volunteer in AYSO, the information in this booklet will provide you with the most fundamental basics of the rules and is not intended as a complete or authoritative reference. For those interested in the complete rules, we recommend you obtain a current copy of the AYSO National Rules and Regulations and the latest AYSO edition of the Laws of the Game. Of course, the best way to learn more about the rules is to volunteer to be an AYSO referee or coach where you will receive the best training available and will be rewarded with years of enjoyment as an AYSO volunteer.

AYSO matches are played in accordance with the current AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game and the AYSO National Rules and Regulations. The International Football Association Board (IFAB) meets yearly to consider modifications to the Laws, and FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the governing body of worldwide soccer, publishes the Laws of the Game including Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees annually which are binding on confederations and member associations as from 1 July following each Annual General Meeting of the IFAB.

Since 1984 AYSO has been authorized to reprint the Laws. The AYSO edition of the Laws of the Game also includes certain "Rules of Competition and modifications," as permitted by the IFAB. Subsequent to the AYSO National Annual General Meeting, the AYSO National Rules and Regulations are published, incorporating any changes approved at the NAGM. It is important that you have the most complete and recent information, and therefore, it is strongly recommended that you obtain current copies of these two booklets each year available from the AYSO Supply Center (888 243 2976) in August.

The United States Soccer Federation (USSF) is recognized by FIFA as the national governing body of soccer in the United States. AYSO is a National Association member of the USSF and a member of the Youth Council of USSF. AYSO is the second largest member of USSF. AYSO referees and coaches are encouraged to use USSF reference material, especially the Guide to Procedures – Referees, Assistant Referees, and Fourth Officials and the Advice to Referees on the Laws of the Game. However, where USSF materials differ from AYSO publications (AYSO National Rules and Regulations, AYSO National Policy Statements, AYSO National Referee and Coach Program materials and this Guidance for Referees and Coaches) the AYSO publications take precedence.



AYSO Vision & Mission

The American Youth Soccer Organization, AYSO, was established in 1964 with nine teams and the dream to bring soccer to American children. Today, AYSO has more than 60,000 teams and 600,000 players in nearly 1,000 Regions. Thanks to the efforts of over 250,000 volunteers and the vision of the founding members, AYSO continues to be a leader in providing quality youth soccer programs.

AYSO Vision

To provide world class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives.

AYSO Mission

To develop and deliver youth soccer programs in a fun, family environment based on the AYSO philosophies:

- **Everyone Plays:** Our goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.
- **Balanced Teams:** Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible—because it is fair and more fun when teams of equal ability play.
- **Open Registration:** Our program is open to all children between 4 and 19 years of age who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.
- **Positive Coaching:** Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players.
- **Good Sportsmanship:** We strive to create a safe, fair, fun and positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

Player Development: We believe that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.



The Spirit Of The Game And Philosophy Of Refereeing

Soccer is designed as a players' game and the involvement of non-players (coaches and referees) is intended to be limited. This can be a difficult concept for those accustomed to seeing active involvement by coaches and officials in other popular sports. Coaches participate in these other popular sports by directing the action of the players, debating rule decisions with officials or completely stopping the action by calling time-outs. Officials, in these other popular sports, participate by stopping the game for each rule violation and not continuing play until the infraction and violator have been identified, the punishment options explained to the opposing team and a final accounting of the entire incident announced or signaled to the spectators. Indeed, it is not uncommon in some sports for considerably more time to be devoted to dealing with these matters than is actually spent playing the game. The spirit of the game of soccer intends something quite different.

In soccer, particularly youth soccer, the application of the spirit of the Law is far more important than the rote application of the letter of the Law. Soccer is a fast-paced game that should flow with a minimum of interruptions. Referees have considerable authority and flexibility when determining whether or not to stop play. Violation of the letter of the Law may be overlooked if the referee considers it to be a trifling or doubtful offense. The referee may also elect not to stop play for a foul when it would be more of an advantage to the team that was fouled to continue playing. It is easy to fall into the trap of becoming overly concerned with the details of various rules and regulations surrounding the game. Players simply want to get on with the enjoyment of playing. Standards that may seem appropriate to enforce during international, college or high school competitions are not necessarily appropriate to apply at all levels of youth soccer.

Soccer is a game, and the reason people play games is to have fun. The role of AYSO coaches and referees is to facilitate a game that will provide the maximum enjoyment for the players. Understanding the spirit of the game and the philosophy of refereeing can significantly contribute toward the enjoyment of the match for all concerned—coaches, referees, spectators and players.

Referees strive for uniformity of interpretation, just as players strive for excellence in playing skills and coaches strive to develop successful teams. With varying degrees of success, each does the best he or she can, and it is the inevitable human variation that makes for greater interest and enjoyment.

Law 1: The Field Of Play

Spirit of the Law

The field of play must be safe for players. The goals and markings must be adequate for the referee to perform his duties and should not be confusing to the players.

Safety

The first concern of the coach and referee regarding the field is, obviously, safety. This applies to both practices and games. Common hazards such as holes, exposed rocks or sprinkler heads, broken glass and miscellaneous debris are fairly easily detected by walking over the field. Some of the less obvious hazards are associated with the goals. The goals must be inspected to ensure they are secured well enough that they will not collapse or be blown over by a strong gust of wind. The nets should also be secured. Loose netting can also present a hazard to players and to goalkeepers in particular. Corner flagposts and halfway flagposts must be the minimum height (5') and in good repair.



Law 2: The Ball

Spirit of the Law

The ball must be safe for the players and of appropriate size and weight.

Size

Proper size, weight and pressure as well as safety make up the checklist for the ball inspection. Size varies according to age group. The correct weight and pressure can be determined sufficiently by feel with some practice.





Law 3: The Number Of Players

Spirit of the Law

Each team is entitled to begin play with a maximum of eleven (11) players and shall not continue play with fewer than seven (7). Exceptions in AYSO are permitted for small-sided games (see Short-Sided Games Guide for Referees).

Maximum and Minimum

Eleven-a-side is the norm, with a minimum of seven required. Fewer than that is allowed and strongly recommended for younger age groups. The AYSO National Coaching Program recommends 3-a-side for U-5 & U-6, 5-a-side for U-8, 7-a-side for U-10 and 9-a-side for U-12. A goal should be disallowed if it is determined that the team scoring the goal had more than the allowable number of players on the field at the time the goal was scored. This is true only if discovered by the referee before restarting play after the goal.

Substitution

In AYSO it is mandatory that all players who are present at the match play a minimum of one half of the game (the "Three Quarter Rule" is strongly encouraged which means no player on a team should play four 'quarters' in a given game, until all players on the team have played three 'quarters'). Exceptions include: players arriving during the second or third 'quarters' must play a minimum of one 'quarter'. Substitutions during regulation play in AYSO matches occur only at 'quarters' or following an injury. Substitution during 'quarters' is managed by the referee stopping play approximately midway into the first and second halves to allow substitutions to occur. In order to avoid interrupting play at inappropriate times, substitutions should occur at a normal stoppage such as a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, etc. These stoppages seldom occur at exactly the midpoint of the half, so the referee will begin looking for a suitable stoppage during the period one minute before to one minute after the midpoint of the half. If no such stoppage occurs during this two-minute period, then the referee may stop play for substitutions and then restart play with a dropped ball at the location of the ball when play was stopped.

Substitution stoppages are intended only to be a time for the quick substitution of a few players and are not intended as mini-half-time periods or opportunities for coaching or any other purpose that would unduly extend the time taken for the game. On exceptionally hot days, the referee may allow some additional time for players to hydrate. The only players entitled to leave the field are those being substituted for, and the only individuals entitled to enter the field are the new players. This entire process should take only about a minute or less.



The referee or assistant referee must keep and submit a record of playing time on the lineup card, and if it appears that a player (or players) will not be substituted into the match after sitting out the entire first half or they have only one 'quarter' of playing time at the end of the third 'quarter,' the referee should inform the coach of the situation before starting play. If the coach still elects not to substitute the player or players into the match, the referee is not empowered to require the player(s) in question to play, as this is solely the coach's decision. The referee should start play and must include the information in the game report for review and consideration by the governing authority (the region, area, section or tournament committee).

Players sent off after the opening kick-off (including during half-time) may not be replaced by a substitute, and the players' team must play with one less player. The players at the end of the half remain players until their substitutes have reported to the referee.

Monitored (Free) Substitution

For U-16 and U-19 age groups only, "Monitored Substitution" is allowed which means substitutions need not occur at pre-set intervals, provided a system is in place which will ensure that every participant plays at least one half of every game by requiring a separate time monitor, independent of either team or coach, who checks each player in or out of the game. It is the responsibility of the regional commissioner or the area director, as the case may be, to monitor this experimental program during the season.

It is generally not the responsibility of referees to monitor playing time during games using monitored substitution, unless the region/area has developed modified lineup cards to check off substitutions by eighths, sixteenths or some substitution increment period other than quarters. Except as provided by the rules of the competition (region, area, section or tournament guidelines), monitored substitution, for U-16 and U-19 games only, may occur only at a stoppage in the match with the referee's permission.

Sanctioning bodies should take care not to establish procedures that will encourage the use of substitutions for delaying a match or limiting quick restarts. Allowing unlimited substitutions during any stoppage of play can often lead to this situation and places undue pressure on the referee to limit these substitutions during a match. Similarly, restrictions may not be imposed upon referees that limit or restrict their authority to conduct a substitution.

Injury Substitution

In the case of an injury, there are two choices available to the team. The injured player may be substituted, in which case the injured player may not return during that 'quarter,' or the injured player may leave the field to recover and the team will play short until the injured player has recovered well enough to return to play with the referee's permission.

Only the injured player gets credit for playing the 'quarter' in which the injury occurred regardless of the total time played in that 'quarter.' The substitute replacing

the injured player must still play a total of at least two additional 'quarters' to satisfy the AYSO requirement for all players to play at least one half of the game.

Changing the Goalkeeper

Goalkeepers may be substituted for as described above. Additionally, another player on the field may change places with the goalkeeper during a normal stoppage in play, provided that the referee is first informed. In youth soccer this sometimes occurs at the taking of a penalty kick, with the players again changing positions, following the same procedure, at a subsequent stoppage in play. The referee will normally not give permission for the change if it would be to the disadvantage of the attacking team wishing to take a quick free kick or corner kick. Subsequent goalkeeper changes must also follow the same procedure. If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission, the referee allows play to continue and then cautions both players during the next normal stoppage in play (due consideration being given according to the age group).



Law 4: The Players' Equipment

Spirit of the Law

The players of each team must be safely equipped and easily distinguished from the opposing team.

Player Equipment

According to the Laws of the Game, "A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewellery)". The basic compulsory equipment of a player includes: a jersey or shirt, shorts, stockings, footwear and shinguards. The shinguards need to provide a reasonable degree of protection and be covered entirely by the stockings.

It is the responsibility of the referee to examine the players and their equipment and then make a decision regarding whether or not there is any danger to the player or to other players. The referee may delegate this inspection responsibility to one or both of the assistant referees. The referee has the obligation and right to disallow players from participation with anything dangerous depending upon the referee's best judgment. AYSO neither endorses nor refutes the claims of companies that produce products intended to increase player safety.

Uniform

AYSO does not train referees to be fashion police, but we do expect the teams to be appropriately attired and equipped. The purpose of uniforms is to allow the teams to be easily distinguished from one another and for the goalkeepers to be further distinguished and recognizable. Players' jerseys must be tucked inside their shorts. Articles worn for adornment that are not part of the team's standard uniform are neither needed nor permitted. In colder times of the year, additional clothing may be desired by the players. With the younger divisions, some deviations are allowed as long as the extra articles of clothing present no safety hazard to either the wearer or to other players and the wearer's team affiliation and player number remain recognizable. Sliding pants, compression shorts, boxer shorts or other types of garments worn under the soccer shorts that are exposed are not illegal but should be the same color as the shorts or as the predominant color of the shorts. Although opinions vary greatly as to the appropriateness, function and esthetic value of these items, they should not be disallowed in games unless the referee believes they present a safety hazard or that they are simply unnecessary adornment.



Law 5: The Referee

Spirit of the Law

The referee's duty is to ensure the match is fun, fair and safe for the players.

The foundation of the AYSO Referee Program is expressed by the following quote from section I.D.5 of the AYSO National Rules and Regulations:

“The Laws of the Game are intended to provide that games should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of referees to penalize only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling and doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of spectators.”

To paraphrase the words of the late, internationally renowned and respected referee and referee instructor, Mr. Ken Aston, “Soccer is like a play in two acts with the referee as the director. The drama contains the full spectrum of emotions including suspense, excitement, periods of calm followed by intense action. There are heroes and occasionally villains, and good performances building to a dramatic conclusion. A good director (referee) with well-coached actors (players) has the capability of creating a wonderful two-act play (game) that will be enjoyed by all who observe.”

The referee is empowered by the Laws of the Game with considerably more latitude to allow play to continue even when an apparent infraction has occurred if, in his judgment, no significant advantage is gained from a trifling or doubtful offense or if stopping play for an infraction of the rules would, in fact, actually be an advantage to the team which committed the offense. The Laws intend for the game to flow with a minimum of interruption, and the referee is charged with conducting the game accordingly.

Referee Signals

Signals, approved by the IFAB and universally in use, are illustrated in the Laws of the Game. The following quote from the 1996 edition of the Laws of the Game still applies today:

While it is not the duty of the referee to explain or mime any offense that has caused him to give a particular decision, there are times when a simple gesture or word of guidance can aid communication and contribute to greater understanding and more respect, to the mutual benefit of referee and players. Improving communication should be encouraged, but the exaggerated miming of offenses can be undignified and confusing and should not be used.

An indication by the referee of the point where a throw-in should be taken may well help prevent a player from taking a throw-in improperly. A call of “Play on, Advantage!” confirms to a player that the referee has not missed a foul but has instead chosen to apply advantage (see Law 5). Even an indication that the ball was



minutely deflected by its touching another player on its path across a touchline, might be helpful in generating a greater understanding between referee and players. A better understanding will lead to more harmonious relationships.

All signals given by the referee should be simple, clear and instinctive. They should be designed to control the game efficiently and to ensure continuous play as far as possible; they are intended essentially to indicate what the next action in the game should be, not principally to justify that action.

An arm pointing to indicate a corner kick, goal kick or foul, and the direction in which it is to be taken, will normally be sufficient. The raised arm to indicate that a free kick is indirect is clearly understood, but if a player queries politely whether the award is a direct free kick or an indirect free kick, a helpful word from the referee, in addition to the appropriate signal, will lead to a better understanding in the future.

For an indirect free kick, the referee is required by the Laws of the Game to signal by holding his arm in the air and keeping it in this position until the ball is touched or played by another player, or the ball goes out of play. This serves as a reminder to players, coaches, spectators and the referee that a goal may not be scored directly from an indirect free kick. For less experienced players' games it is also helpful for the referee to help players learn that the raised referee hand means the kick is indirect.

Advantage

The Advantage Clause, in the Laws of the Game, instructs the referee, in the interest of the flow of the game, to not stop play for an infraction when the referee believes that it would be more of an advantage for the team that was fouled to allow play to continue. If, after allowing Advantage, the advantage does not materialize within about 3 seconds, the referee should stop play and award the free kick.

If, during this time, a second offense is committed by a teammate of the player who committed the first offense, the referee must sanction the more serious of the two offenses or again apply advantage.

The Diagonal System of Control

The diagonal system of control is the only system for officiating outdoor soccer games recognized by FIFA and AYSO. This system employs three officials, one referee and two assistant referees. In addition to being the universally approved method of officiating outdoor matches, the diagonal system is an effective method for increasing the number and retention of referees by recruiting, training and assigning them first as assistant referees.

The use of the dual refereeing system is not an approved technique for officiating AYSO games. The dual refereeing system uses two referees on the field, each with a whistle. This system encourages the development of poor officiating habits and is the source of frustrations as the officials attempt the impossible task of remaining close to play and, at the same time, being correctly positioned to watch for offside infractions. This system also fosters hesitancy on the part of the officials and unnecessary interruptions in play as the two officials attempt to consult with one another for a consensus in making calls.



If only two qualified officials are available for a match, one should assume the duties of the referee and the other should become an assistant referee. A volunteer club linesman, if available, after receiving instructions from the referee, should also be used. The only duty of a club linesman is to indicate when the ball has completely crossed the touchline or the goal line. If no club linesman can be found, the referee must assume the duties of the missing assistant referee, just as he or she would if working the game alone.

Sideline Behavior by Coaches and Spectators

AYSO coaches and referees (and all other AYSO volunteers) have a responsibility to provide a fun, pleasant environment for the players. According to the AYSO National Rules and Regulations, it is the duty of each coach, referee and official to “conduct him/herself in a manner becoming a member of AYSO”, “comply with the AYSO Rules and Regulations”, “encourage clean competition and good sportsmanship”, prohibit negative comments and complaints about officiating” and “present a healthy, athletic environment for team members by neither consuming alcoholic beverages nor using tobacco products during practices or games or in the immediate vicinity of the soccer fields.” Coaches must also “Limit his/her sideline participation during AYSO games to comments that are positive, instructional and/or encouraging”.

Additionally, coaches and referees must work together to ensure the comments and behavior of spectators are within the boundaries of the AYSO philosophical tenets. Comments and behavior that may be common at the high school, college or professional level are often not appropriate in youth sports. Referees are authorized to stop, suspend or terminate play for outside interference of any kind. AYSO is about ‘kids first and soccer second.’

Cooperation between coaches and referees is essential in maintaining an appropriate environment for the players. The lessons young players learn from the behavior coaches and referees demonstrate will long endure after win/loss records are forgotten.

Law 6: The Assistant Referees

Spirit of the Law

The assistant referees assist the referee in officiating the match.

'Running the line' as an assistant referee is a demanding task when done correctly, and is not easily mastered. The assistant referees must follow the lead and instructions of the referee. Their positions are determined by the position of the players, ball and instructions of the referee, and they must be ready to adjust based on the constantly changing conditions during play. They are also expected to judge misconduct or fouls out of sight of the referee and, when these activities occur, to bring them to the attention of the referee.

Assistant Referee Signals

Signals, approved by the IFAB and universally in use, are also illustrated in the Laws of the Game. Standardized flag signals are used to avoid confusion. Additional communication with the referee is also made through frequent eye contact and by other accepted signals agreed upon during the referee's pre-game instructions.

Club Linesmen

Club Linesmen are sometimes used when neutral assistant referees are not available. Club Linesmen are usually selected from volunteers present at the game and often are supporters of one of the clubs or teams playing in the game, thus the derivation of the name 'Club Linesmen.' Because of their lack of official training, Club Linesmen have very limited responsibilities.

To acquire the most effective cooperation from Club Linesmen, the following procedure shall be adopted:

- The Club Linesmen shall report to the referee before the start of the game for instructions. The referee shall inform them that, regardless of their personal opinion, the referee's decision is final and must not be questioned.
- Their work as Club Linesmen is to signal when the ball is entirely over the touchline or goal line subject always to the final decision of the referee.
- Keeping in mind their distinct duties as outlined above, the referee shall decide beforehand exactly what he requires of the Club Linesmen and, as head of the trio, tell them clearly how they can best assist him. The three officials must therefore confer before the game, and the referee's instructions must be specific in order to avoid confusion. The Club Linesmen must, for their part, fully appreciate the referee's authority and accept the referee's

ruling without question should there be any difference of opinion among them. They must be supportive and never contradict his decisions. They are to assist, not insist.





Law 7: The Duration Of The Match

Spirit of the Law

The players are entitled to the entire designated playing time.

Adding Time

Referees have sole responsibility for maintaining an accurate accounting of playing time. Additional time may be added by the referee to make up for any time lost due to injury, substitution, unusual delay, time-wasting tactics or any other cause. It is the referee's responsibility to determine when these particular events have occurred and to add time for the time lost.

Time should not be added (or the 'clock stopped') following a goal or to administer a caution or a send-off, or other such stoppages unless the delay is, in the opinion of the referee, unusually long. The time needed to attend to an injured player on the field as well as the time needed to make substitutions at the 'quarters' is easily determined and should be added. However, determining what constitutes an unusual delay or time-wasting tactic requires more careful consideration by the referee. An unusual delay would involve such things as retrieving a lost ball, removing an outside agent (dog, spectator, elephant, etc.) from the field or rain delay.

Referees are trained not to be influenced by the emotions of the moment when determining whether or not to add on time. Referees must consider what is fair for BOTH teams in determining the exact moment to end the half or the game. For example, a player on a breakaway attack on goal at the end of an exciting match with the score tied should not be given extra time to see if the player scores or not. Similarly, the referee should not stop the clock because the team that is winning is not rushing to put the ball into play near the end of the game. In general, the referee will not add time at the end of the match for an event for which he or she would not have added time had it occurred at the beginning of the game. The ball does not have to be in play for the game to end.

Wasting Time Versus Consuming Time

Referees are also taught to distinguish between time-wasting and time-consuming tactics, the former being illegal and the latter legal. Time wasting would involve techniques used by one team to waste time that the opposing team has no opportunity to counter. A goalkeeper refusing to release the ball into play within six seconds or a team taking an unusually long time to put the ball into play on a given restart are examples of time wasting. In such situations, the opposing team is powerless to prevent the situation and must rely on the referee to intervene. On the other hand, a team may legally consume time by simply skillfully controlling the ball.

Kicking the ball out of play can be interpreted as legal time consumption or illegal time wasting depending on the circumstances. Kicking the ball out of play is often a good defensive decision and should not be penalized. However, if in the opinion of the referee, the player kicking the ball out of play is intentionally using excessive force so that the kick causes an unusual delay in retrieving the ball, this could be considered an illegal time-wasting tactic.





Law 8: The Start And Restart Of Play

Spirit of the Law

Neither team shall have an unfair advantage at the start of play.

Starting Time and Forfeits

If one or both teams are not present with the minimum number of players at the scheduled starting time, the referee should wait the time specified in the rules of the competition and then abandon the match. If the rules of competition do not specify a time, the referee should wait 15 minutes and then abandon the match. The referee may not declare a forfeit but must make a full report to the appropriate authorities, who will decide what action is to be taken.

Coin Toss

To begin the game, the team winning the coin toss chooses which goal they will attack in the first half, and the other team must kick off (the same procedure applies to a first overtime period when required). When kicks from the penalty mark are needed to determine a winner, another coin toss is conducted at the end of regulation play and/or the last overtime period. The team winning this coin toss has the choice whether to take the first or second kick.

Kick-Off

Starting play with a kick-off is a relatively simple process and should not present significant difficulties. Remember, the ball is not in play until it has been kicked and moves forward. It is not uncommon for the opposing team, upon hearing the whistle for the kick-off, to immediately run into the center circle rather than waiting for the ball to be kicked into play. The correct restart in this case is to retake the kick-off.

Dropped Ball

The dropped ball is used to restart play after the referee has stopped play for some neutral reason such as an injury, interference by an outside agent or when play is stopped for substitution with the ball still in play. The dropped ball should not be used to restart play when it is not obvious who last played the ball before it went out of play. Referees must make a decision.

When having a dropped ball, although not required, referees usually will wait until one player from each team has taken up position to attempt to kick at the ball and then will instruct the players to wait until the ball hits the ground before commencing the kicking. If the ball is kicked before it has touched the ground, the dropped ball must be retaken. The referee may remind the players to be good sports and try not to kick each other.

Common Elements of Restarts

There are a total of eight different ways to restart play, and for each restart except the dropped ball the player restarting play may not touch or play the ball a second time until it has been touched or played by at least one additional player from either team. The dropped ball is the exception because it is the referee who is restarting play.





Law 9: The Ball In And Out Of Play

Spirit of the Law

The ball remains in play even if an assistant referees has signaled, unless the referee has signaled it out of play or has stopped play.

Ball in Play

The Laws of the Game state that for the following restarts the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves: free kicks outside the penalty area, indirect free kicks by the attacking team within their opponents' penalty area and corner kicks. The United States Soccer Federation's Advice to Referees states that "The distance to be moved is minimal and the 'kick' need only be a touch of the ball with the foot in a kicking motion." "The referee must make the final decision on what is and is not 'kicked and moved' based on the spirit and flow of the match". It is important to always remember that referees should not interfere with play for trifling or doubtful offences. This also applies to kick-offs and penalty kicks, with the additional requirement that movement must be in a forward direction.

Ball out of Play

It is the position of the ball, and not that of the player, that determines when the ball is out of play. This concept is somewhat foreign because the reverse is true in other popular sports such as football and basketball. It is also sometimes difficult to resist the temptation to think the ball is out of play when it touches a goal line or touchline, but we need to remember that the entire ball must cross the entire line before it is out. Position is critical when judging this fact, and in the vast majority of situations, we should thank the assistant referee for being in the best position to make this decision.

Curving balls from corner kicks or kicked from near the touchlines or goal lines may briefly cross the outside plane of the line in the air and then return within the playing field. In these situations, the ball should be declared out of play and the appropriate restart taken.

Law 10: The Method Of Scoring

Spirit of the Law

The referee will award a goal when the entire ball enters the goal except as otherwise provided by the Laws of the Game.

Goal Versus No Goal

If a player kicks the ball into the goal making the net bulge to withstand the impact, most will realize a goal has been scored. However, goals are not always so obvious. For those less than obvious goals, we must frequently rely on the correct positioning and judgment of the assistant referee, who will apply the same set of criteria used to determine when the ball is out of play together with the fact that it has left the field between the goalposts and under the crossbar. The best seat in the house to judge this is occupied by the assistant referee looking directly down the goal line.

One circumstance under which a goal can be scored that is not obvious occurs when the goalkeeper attempts to stop a particularly hard shot that causes the goalkeeper to retreat sufficiently back across the goal line that the ball completely crosses the goal line for a brief period while in the possession of the goalkeeper.



Law 11: Offside

Spirit of the Law

A player may not participate or interfere with play from an offside position.

Origin

The late Ken Aston, internationally renowned referee instructor, gave the following account of the origin of the Offside Law.

Many years ago there was not an offside law in soccer. In the English schools where soccer was often played, it was noticed that players who were not willing to work with their teammates to help advance the ball would simply loiter around in front of the opponents' goal waiting for the ball to arrive so they could score a goal.

The schoolmasters determined this was not a sporting thing to do and therefore made a rule that any player guilty of this offense would be temporarily off their side (off the team) and not allowed to play. Thus, the Offside Law was born. As a point of interest, Ken would point out there is no "s" at the end of the term offside—since a player plays for only one side (team), he can be taken off only one side (team), not off both sides.

Application

The argument is sometimes made that a player who is standing in an offside position, even though inactive, is a cause for concern or worry on the part of the opposing goalkeeper or defender and therefore this can be interpreted as participation. This argument is not considered valid because referees cannot base their decisions on what is in the minds of players but rather must make their decisions based on what has, in fact, actually occurred. If players were penalized because they caused the opponents to worry about them because of what they might be able to do, this would have eliminated a lot of great players from the game. Do you think opposing teams had cause for concern or worry when they were about to play against great players such as Pelé or Mia Hamm?

As an example, consider the following: A player with the ball is near the opposing team's corner flag. The opposing goalkeeper is anticipating the ball being passed in front of the goal and has positioned himself close to the near goalpost and out from the goal line about two yards, which is close to where an opposing attacking player is legally positioned waiting for the ball. Another attacking player has taken an offside position inside the far goalpost on the goal line behind the goalkeeper. The ball is centered to the legally positioned teammate who, to the goalkeeper's dismay, heads the ball just inside the near goalpost. This goal should be allowed (and applauded) if the player in the offside position did not actively interfere with play or an opponent, despite proximity to the goalkeeper. But what if..., begin the dissenting

voices. The ‘what ifs’ would each be considered separately, but in the situation described, a goal should be awarded.

If the assistant referee does not raise the flag immediately when a player is in an offside position, players, coaches and spectators need not get upset. The assistant referee is properly waiting to assess whether or not the player in an offside position becomes involved in active play. By using a brief delay and observing the caution “If in doubt, don’t signal,” assistant referees do not stop the game needlessly. Furthermore, the referee is not obligated to accept the assistant referee’s recommendation to make the offside call, and may “wave off” the assistant referee’s flag. Accordingly, players should continue to play the ball until the referee has determined that an offside offense has occurred.

The Offside Law always seems a source of debate and controversy as it contains elements of fact and of judgment which the referee must consider and interpret. There are additional criteria the referee must consider in some situations which are best learned through demonstration under the direction of a competent referee instructor.



Law 12: Fouls And Misconduct

Spirit of the Law

Teams that fail to play in a sporting, fair and safe manner will be penalized.

Referees and coaches want the game to be enjoyable at all levels of play. Player enjoyment and deliberate fouling are not compatible. Coaches, through their teachings and behavior, set the tone for fair play, sporting behavior and injury prevention by reinforcing the importance of fair play at all practices and games. Referees must walk the fine line between letting the game flow without unnecessary interruption and knowing when to interfere with the action to keep play within the boundaries of fairness and safety. Coaches and referees must work together to ensure players learn and abide by the Laws of the Game and respect the principles of fair play and sporting behavior.

Direct Free Kick Fouls Most Frequently Debated

Direct Free Kick Fouls are rare with the younger players whose actions are more often clumsy; rather than careless, reckless, or using excessive force. With older players, the game becomes more intense, and challenges for the ball often involve vigorous contact between players. The referee must judge the manner in which the contact is made. The fact that players may get knocked to the ground or bumped off the ball does not necessarily mean a foul has occurred. It is not a democracy; only the referee decides foul or no foul, even if in the minority. There are 10 Direct Free Kick fouls; the following four are most frequently debated.

Handling the Ball

Handling the ball is arguably the source of most confusion. Referees must judge whether the contact of ball and hand or arm was caused by a deliberate act of the player or if the ball struck the hand or arm in the normal course of play. If the referee feels the contact was not deliberate, then no foul has occurred and play should continue. It matters not that an advantage might have been gained as long as the contact of ball and hand or arm was not deliberate.

Tripping

There is a difference between tripping and being tripped. When a player stumbles or falls the referee must judge whether or not an opponent illegally tripped the player or if the trip was the result of a fair challenge for the ball.

Often when a fair tackle is made, with contact first being made with the ball, the opponent may trip over the extended legs of the player making the tackle. However, even though contact is first made with the ball, if the player making the tackle



subsequently lifts his or her leg with the intent to cause the opponent to fall, it is a foul and a direct free kick or penalty kick must be awarded to the opposing team.

A player who tackles an opponent, in a manner that endangers the safety of the opponent, must be sent off for serious foul play.

Charging

A legal charge is an attempt to physically separate an opponent from control of the ball. Charging while contending for the ball is fair providing the following conditions are met:

- The player being charged is within playing distance of the ball
- The charge is a sharp staccato impact, not a push
- When charging from the side, contact is made as near shoulder to shoulder as possible, depending upon the relative heights of the players involved
- If the charge is made in a manner that the referee considers to be careless, reckless or using excessive force, a direct free kick or penalty kick, as appropriate, is awarded to the opposing team.
- If the charge is otherwise fair, but not made within playing distance of the ball, the charging player is called for impeding the progress of an opponent, and an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team.

Screening or Shielding

Players may often place themselves between an opponent and the ball to screen or shield the ball. This is a legal tactic provided the ball is, in the opinion of the referee, within playing distance of the player. If a player while screening or shielding the ball illegally uses his or her hands, arms, legs or body (pushing, holding, etc.) to prevent an opponent from challenging for the ball, it is a direct free kick foul.

Tackling

Legal tackling is the act of blocking the ball or moving the ball away from the feet of an opponent in a manner that is not dangerous to that opponent. Players controlling the ball with their feet may be tackled by an opponent who is attempting to dispossess them of the ball. If contact that the referee considers to be careless, reckless or using excessive force is made with the player being tackled, then a free kick may be awarded plus possibly a caution (yellow card) or send off (red card) depending on the circumstances. In some cases, contact with the player after the ball has been played may also be a foul, again depending upon the circumstances.

Indirect Free Kick Fouls Most Frequently Debated

Indirect free kick fouls result in an indirect free kick rather than a direct free kick as the penalty. The following two indirect free kick fouls are the frequent source of debate:



Impeding

Impeding the progress of an opponent, like charging, has a negative connotation and, like charging, can be legal or illegal depending upon the circumstances. Impeding involves using one's body to prevent an opponent's access to the ball. The terms 'shielding' or 'screening' are also used to describe a legal tactic employed by players to deny opponents access to the ball. In order for impeding, shielding or screening to be legal, the ball must be within playing distance of the player shielding the ball. It is not necessary for the player to be touching the ball with his feet as long as it remains within playing distance. It is not uncommon for impeding to begin legally and quickly evolve to illegal pushing or holding.

Dangerous Play

Although the Laws of the Game state that an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee, plays in a dangerous manner, the indirect free kick must be awarded only if an opponent is involved and the act is dangerous to either the player or to the opponent. If the dangerous act does not involve an opponent and play is stopped, play must be restarted with a dropped ball.

Goalkeeper Possession

The goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball by touching it with any part of his hand or arms. Possession of the ball includes the goalkeeper deliberately parrying the ball, but does not include the circumstances where, in the opinion of the referee, the ball rebounds accidentally from the goalkeeper, for example after he has made a save.

The ball is also considered to be in the possession of the goalkeeper when

- bouncing the ball and catching it
- throwing the ball in the air and catching it

A goalkeeper who moves outside his or her own penalty area to intercept the ball and play it with his or her feet, back into the penalty area may then handle the ball, unless the ball was deliberately kicked directly to the goalkeeper by a teammate or the goalkeeper received the ball directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate.

If a teammate, taking a throw-in, throws the ball in the general direction of the goalkeeper, but before the goalkeeper receives the ball, it is intercepted in the air and headed by another teammate, the goalkeeper is allowed to handle the ball within his or her own penalty area.

Temporary Expulsions

If a player cannot control his or her emotions and needs a 'time-out' to regain control, either the player must recognize this and request permission to leave the field of play or the coach should convince the player to do so. Players have the right to ask the referee for permission to leave the field of play for a variety of reasons, and the referee should grant this permission. Coaches also have the right to ask



their players to request this option from the referee. In no case is a substitution allowed to replace these players for this temporary interruption in their play.

Coaches also have the right to call players to the touchline during play if they feel the need to tell them something or to 'calm them down', but the player must remain on the field of play. Giving the coach this responsibility, which is where it belongs, is not a violation of the Laws.

FIFA has expressly forbidden mandatory temporary expulsions, sometimes called "sit outs", by a referee for cautioned players to regain their composure or to 'cool off.'

Serious Foul Play

It is serious foul play, a sending-off offense, when a player uses deliberate violence when challenging for the ball against an opponent on the field of play while the ball is in play.

Violent Conduct

It is violent conduct, a sending-off offense, when a player is guilty of aggression toward an opponent when not challenging for the ball. If the ball is in play, a direct free kick or a penalty kick, as appropriate, is awarded in favor of the team of the player against whom the aggression was directed. If the ball is out of play, the match is resumed with the appropriate restart.

It is also violent conduct if a player, substitute or substituted player attacks a teammate, the referee, an assistant referee, a coach, a spectator or any other person. If the ball is in play, an indirect free kick is awarded against the team of the player committing the violent conduct. If the aggression took place outside the boundaries of the field of play, a dropped ball is the correct restart. If the ball is out of play, the match is resumed with the appropriate restart.

Cautions (Yellow Cards) and Send-Offs (Red Cards)

A player, substitute or substituted player who is cautioned or sent off during the match is shown the yellow or red card, as appropriate. Cards are only shown to players, substitutes and substituted players. The referee has the authority to take disciplinary sanctions and show the red or yellow cards from the moment he or she enters the field of play prior to the game until he or she leaves the field of play following the final whistle. The purpose of a caution is to give players fair notice that the manner in which they are playing or behaving is unacceptable and that they will be sent off the field for the remainder of the game if they continue to play or behave in this way. The referee may offer a verbal reprimand or warning, which is not an official caution, and in this case, will not hold up a yellow card.

The cards are never shown to coaches or spectators for their misconduct. The referee may, however, expel team officials from the field of play and its immediate surroundings without displaying a card. The referee's report (in accordance with region, area or section procedures, as appropriate) must indicate in detail all misconduct occurring before, during and after the match.



Children who are under 12 years of age should not be formally cautioned or sent off unless there are exceptional circumstances. Referees should consider whether children in this age group are fully aware of their actions and should consult and work with the coach to get the desired behavior. Young players can usually be controlled by a verbal admonishment, thus avoiding the need to display the cards.

In the case of players being sent off (red carded) for misconduct after the game has started, substitution is not permitted for that player and the team must play with one less player for the duration of the match. The player that was sent off receives a minimum one game suspension and additional sanctions may be imposed pending review by the governing authority. As with cautioning, sending off young players should be avoided.

Administering Cautions and Send-Offs

Referees, when administering cautions or send-offs, should

- treat the individual in a calm, courteous and respectful manner
- try to take the player or team official aside so he or she is out of the direct earshot of other players, team officials and spectators
- explain briefly the reason he or she is being cautioned, sent off or expelled
- display the yellow or red card, in the case of players, substitutes or substituted players
- avoid a protracted discussion with the person being cautioned, sent off or expelled

Although the Laws of the Game require that “a player who has been sent off must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area” youth players who are sent off must be allowed to remain on the sideline, under the control of their coach unless their parents are present.

Spectator Misconduct

The model set by the adults present (referees, coaches and spectators) at games influences the development and behavior of the young players watching. The referee team establishes the parameters of acceptable behavior and must be attentive to and deal appropriately with any adult behavior that does not present positive role modeling for youth. Law 5 and AYSO National Rules and Regulations provide this authority.

The influence adults have on the impressionable young players in AYSO will far outlast the memories of win/loss records. The behavior modeled by the adults present at AYSO games should have a positive effect on the development of the players watching. All adults present at AYSO games share in the responsibility to ensure positive role modeling is demonstrated. However the ultimate responsibility rests with the AYSO referees as the guardians of the game to ensure there is truth in the motto that...

“In AYSO, it’s about more than the game!”

Law 13: Free Kicks

Spirit of the Law

Free kicks are to be taken without interference from the opposing team.

Application

Free kicks generally are either ceremonial kicks or quick kicks. The ceremonial kick occurs when the team awarded the kick elects to take its time before taking the kick, possibly to attempt a set play learned in practice. It is the duty of the referee to enforce the Law and ensure that the opponents retreat the required distance as quickly as possible.

Conversely, it is the kicking team's right to put the ball into play quickly and thus take advantage of an opportunity to advance the ball or to score a goal before the opposing defenders can get organized. In this situation, the team taking the kick may elect to kick the ball before the opponents have retreated the required distance. The quick-kick option is the choice of the team taking the kick and is perfectly legal as long as the ball is placed correctly, it is stationary before it is kicked and the referee has not told the kicking team to wait for his signal.



Law 14: The Penalty Kick

Spirit of the Law

A penalty kick is awarded the offended team when a defending player commits a direct free kick foul within his own penalty area.

Application

A penalty kick provides an excellent goal-scoring opportunity, and this is precisely the intent of the Law. Direct free kick fouls, when committed by the defense close to their goal (inside the penalty area), seriously hinder the attacking team's chances of scoring a goal. Thus the Penalty Kick Law was devised to provide an additional measure of deterrence for committing direct free kick fouls near one's own goal. In the younger age divisions, direct free kick fouls are rare, and the use of penalty kicks should likewise be rare at this level of play.

The penalty kick is one of the few times players must wait for the referee's signal (whistle) before restarting play so that the referee can ensure that all the players are first legally positioned outside the penalty area and the penalty arc and no closer to the goal line than the ball. Once the referee has given the signal for the penalty kick to be taken, the kick will not be interrupted by the referee if an infraction is committed by either team until the outcome of the kick is determined. The resulting action of the referee will depend upon the circumstances of which team committed the infraction and whether or not a goal was scored.

Penalty Kick–Goalkeeper Movement

At the taking of a penalty kick, or kicks from the penalty mark, goalkeepers must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, but may move laterally along the goal line, between the goalposts, until the ball is kicked. If the goalkeeper moves forward off the goal line before the ball is kicked and the shot does not score, the penalty kick must be retaken.



Law 15: The Throw-In

Spirit of the Law

When the ball completely crosses the touchline, it shall be thrown back into the field of play by a player of the team opposite to that of the player who last touched it.

Application

The throw-in is one of the simplest and most common restarts and should not be the source of any unusual problems. The ball is thrown in from where it left the field and the opposing team is required to retreat at least two meters (yards) from the point at which the throw-in is to be taken. The Thrower may not play the ball twice in succession (cannot throw the ball to oneself).

There have developed over the years some misconceptions regarding the throw-in. One of the most common misconceptions is that spin on the ball is illegal. This is not the case, and in fact, it is almost impossible to throw the ball without some measure of spin. In reality, side spin on the ball is generally an indication that the ball has slipped through the hands of the thrower and the ball is not thrown as far or as accurately as the thrower intended. The ball can generally be thrown farther with one hand than it can with two, and this is what is considered illegal. It is the referee's duty to determine if this has occurred, but the simple fact that the ball is spinning should not, by itself, be reason to consider the throw-in illegal.

Another misconception is that the ball must be thrown with considerable force. The operative word is "thrown," and as long as there is a smooth continuous motion with the throw, it is perfectly legal even if the ball does not travel very far from the thrower.

Various techniques are employed by players when throwing in the ball. It is not uncommon for players to make a running throw-in. At the moment the ball is released, with the running throw-in, usually the toe of one foot will be dragging along the ground, which satisfies the requirements of the Law. As the players advance in age, they may develop an acrobatic flip throw-in that can significantly increase the distance of the throw. This flip throw-in is legal as long as all elements of the Law are complied with at the moment the ball is released.

Law 16: The Goal Kick

Spirit of the Law

A goal kick is awarded to the defending team when the ball crosses the goal line last touched by a member of the attacking team, without a goal being scored.

Application

The goal kick is a relatively simple method of restarting play and generally causes few difficulties. As with free kicks, the team taking the goal kick may elect to take a quick kick before all of the opposing team has retreated outside the penalty area as required. The kick is retaken if it is touched by another player before leaving the penalty area, or if it is touched for a second time before leaving the penalty area by the player taking the kick. The offside exception for the first player to receive the ball from a goal kick is rarely of any consequence in the younger divisions. However, in the older divisions, this fact must be kept in mind during those long goal kicks that can reach a teammate in the opponents' half of the field.



Law 17: The Corner Kick

Spirit of the Law

A corner kick is awarded the attacking team after the ball crosses the goal line last touched by a member of the defending team, without a goal being scored.

Application

Corner kicks are excellent goal-scoring opportunities in the older divisions where the ball can be easily kicked in front of the goal from the corner area. Difficulties arise fairly often involving the Offside Law on corner kicks. The first person to receive the ball from the corner kick is, of course, exempt from the Offside Law. However, when a short corner kick is attempted by making a short pass from the corner arc to a nearby teammate, it is fairly common for this player to pass the ball back to the original kicker, who is running down the goal line and may be in an offside position at that time, depending on the position of the defenders.

Ball Placement

The corner arc is to be treated in the same manner as other field markings. It is not required that the whole of the ball be completely within the corner area. As long as any part of the ball is within or overhanging the corner arc lines, this is considered a legal placement of the ball for a corner kick.

