IFAB

Laws of the Game 20/21

Download
Laws of the Game App

IFAB®

THE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION BOARD

Laws of the Game 2020/21

The International Football Association Board
Münstergasse 9, 8001 Zurich, Switzerland
T: +41 (0)44 245 1886, F: +41 (0)44 245 1887
www.theifab.com

This booklet may not be reproduced or translated in whole or in part in any manner without the permission of The International Football Association Board.

Effective from 1st June 2020

Contents

9 Introduction
11 The philosophy and spirit of the Laws
12 Managing changes to the Laws
14 Background to the 2020/21 revision of the Laws
18 The Future

20 Notes on the Laws of the Game

23 Laws of the Game 2020/21
24 **Modifications to the Laws**
28 Guidelines for temporary dismissals (sin bins)
32 Guidelines for return substitutes
34 **01 The Field of Play**
44 **02 The Ball**
48 **03 The Players**
56 **04 The Players' Equipment**
64 **05 The Referee**
74 **06 The Other Match Officials**
82 **07 The Duration of the Match**
86 **08 The Start and Restart of Play**
90 **09 The Ball In and Out of Play**
92 **10 Determining the Outcome of a Match**
98 **11 Offside**
102 **12 Fouls and Misconduct**
118 **13 Free Kicks**
122 **14 The Penalty Kick**
128 **15 The Throw-in**
132 **16 The Goal Kick**
136 **17 The Corner Kick**

140 Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol

150 Law changes 2020/21
151 Outline summary of Law changes
153 Clarification
154 Editorial changes
156 Details of all Law changes

168 Glossary
169 Football bodies
170 Football terms
180 Referee terms

182 Practical Guidelines for Match Officials
183 Introduction
184 Positioning, Movement and Teamwork
198 Body Language, Communication and Whistle
204 Other advice
- Advantage
- Allowance for time lost
- Holding an opponent
- Offside
- Injuries
- Treatment/assessment after a caution/sending-off

IFAB®

THE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION BOARD

Introduction

The philosophy and spirit of the Laws

Football is the greatest sport on earth. It is played in every country and at many different levels. The Laws of the Game are the same for all football throughout the world from the FIFA World Cup™ final through to a game between young children in a remote village.

That the same Laws apply in every match in every confederation, country, town and village throughout the world is a considerable strength which must be preserved. This is also an opportunity which must be harnessed for the good of football everywhere.

Football must have Laws which keep the game 'fair' as a crucial foundation of the beauty of the 'beautiful game' is its fairness – this is a vital feature of the 'spirit' of the game. The best matches are those where the referee is rarely needed as the players play with respect for each other, the match officials and the Laws.

The integrity of the Laws, and the referees who apply them, must always be protected and respected. All those in authority, especially coaches and team captains, have a clear responsibility to the game to respect the match officials and their decisions.

Managing changes to the Laws

The first 'universal' football Laws were drawn up in 1863 and in 1886 The International Football Association Board (The IFAB) was founded by the four British football associations (The FA, Scottish FA, FA of Wales and Irish FA) as the worldwide body with sole responsibility for developing and preserving the Laws of the Game. FIFA joined The IFAB in 1913.

For a Law to be changed, The IFAB must be convinced that the change will benefit the game. This means that the potential change will usually be tested. For every proposed change, the focus must be on: fairness, integrity, respect, safety, the enjoyment of the participants and how technology can benefit the game. The Laws must also encourage participation from everyone, regardless of background or ability.

Although accidents occur, the Laws should make the game as safe as possible. This requires players to show respect for their opponents and referees should create a safe environment by dealing strongly with those whose play is too aggressive and dangerous. The Laws embody the unacceptability of unsafe play in their disciplinary phrases, e.g. 'reckless challenge' (caution = yellow card/YC) and 'endangering the safety of an opponent' or 'using excessive force' (sending-off = red card/RC).

Football must be attractive and enjoyable for players, match officials, coaches, as well as spectators, fans, administrators etc. The Laws must help make the game attractive and enjoyable so people, regardless of age, race, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability etc. want to take part and enjoy their involvement with football.

Football's Laws are relatively simple, compared to other team sports, but as many situations are 'subjective' and referees are human (and thus make mistakes) some decisions will inevitably cause debate and discussion. For some people, this discussion is part of the game's enjoyment and attraction but, whether decisions are right or wrong, the 'spirit' of the game requires that referees' decisions are always respected.

The Laws cannot deal with every possible situation, so where there is no direct provision in the Laws, The IFAB expects the referee to make a decision within the 'spirit' of the game – this often involves asking the question, "what would football want/expect?"

The IFAB will continue to engage with the global football family so changes to the Laws benefit football at all levels and in every corner of the world, and so the integrity of the game, the Laws and the referees is respected, valued and protected.

Background to the 2020/21 revision of the Laws

The 2016/17 revision of the Laws of the Game started the most far-reaching and comprehensive period of Law changes in The IFAB's history. The aim was to make the Laws clearer, more accessible and to ensure they reflect the needs of the modern game at all levels.

Many of the changes were the result of suggestions from individuals, groups and national FAs from around the world which were then reviewed by The IFAB's Football and Technical Advisory Panels to ensure that all areas of football contribute to the evolution of the Laws, as the Laws are for everyone involved in the game, not just the referees.

The changes in recent years have extended many of the principles established in the 2016/17 revision and, as outlined in the '*play fair!*' strategy, have tried to improve the game's attractiveness and the levels of behaviour.

In March 2018, The IFAB AGM approved use of video assistant referees (VARs). The introduction of VARs has been the biggest revolution in professional football for more than a century. Given that it took football many years of debate before it took the tentative steps to see if technology could assist decision-making without destroying the game's almost non-stop flow of action and emotion, it has been a remarkably fast 'revolution'.

The first VAR match took place in New Jersey, NY, the USA on 12th August 2016 and, remarkably, only 23 months later, VARs were being used in the 2018 FIFA World Cup™ final in Moscow. VARs will never solve every 'dispute', as so many decisions are subjective, but their adoption by most of the world's major countries demonstrates that football believes that VARs bring greater fairness and improved player behaviour.

The Law changes for 2019/20 have directly and positively affected the way the game is played and its image, e.g.:

- there is more constructive play at goal kicks as the ball no longer has to leave the penalty area before it can be played;
- attacking players not being allowed into the defensive 'wall' has removed the disruption and conflict, which also delayed the kick being taken;
- the new dropped ball procedure has speeded up this restart and removed the unfairness which used to occur.

The changes for 2020/21 are relatively few and are mostly clarifications, as the major revision of the Laws has been completed. The main changes are:

- Handball – the boundary between the arm (handball) and shoulder (not handball) has been defined and the wording for accidental handball offences has been made clearer.
- If a penalty kick misses the goal or rebounds from the goal, the goalkeeper is not penalised for encroachment unless it clearly affected the kicker.
- The goalkeeper is warned for their first offence at the taking of a penalty kick, and then cautioned (yellow card) for any further offence(s).
- Cautions are not carried forward into kicks from the penalty mark.
- In VAR matches, there is an expectation that there will be an on-field review if the decision being reviewed is subjective, i.e. the referee will look at the replay footage in the referee review area.

The IFAB will continue to experiment with significant Law changes and in the coming year, there will be trials of special substitution procedures for a player who has sustained a head injury and may have, or develop, concussion.

The Future

The IFAB's '*play fair!*' strategy for 2017-22 was established to examine and consider proposed changes to see if they will benefit the game. It has been well received throughout the football world and there has been strong approval of its focus on three important areas:

- **Fairness and integrity**
  - will the proposed change strengthen the game's fairness and integrity on the field of play?
- **Universality and inclusion**
  - will the proposed change benefit football at all levels throughout the world?
  - will the proposed change encourage more people from all backgrounds and abilities to take part in and enjoy football?
- **The growth of technology**
  - will the proposed change have a positive impact on the game?

During 2020/21, The IFAB, working with its expert panels, will continue to consult widely on a number of important Law-related topics, including player behaviour and potentially enhancing the role of the captain.

By focussing on fairness, universality and inclusion, and technology, The IFAB will continue to develop the Laws to promote a better game on every football field in every part of the world.

The significant Law changes in recent years have begun to make a major contribution to increasing playing time, fairness and the attractiveness of the game. Along with the impact of VARs, player behaviour is also expected to continue to improve. All this will make the game even more enjoyable to play, watch and referee.

The IFAB greatly enjoys engaging with people throughout the world and we are always very pleased and interested to receive suggestions or questions relating to the Laws of the Game. Indeed, many of the recent Law changes have come from suggestions from people from many different parts of the world.

We hope to engage more easily and extensively in the future so please check for details on our website: www.theifab.com

Please continue to send your suggestions, ideas and questions to: lawenquiries@theifab.com

Notes on the Laws of the Game

Official languages

The IFAB publishes the Laws of the Game in English, French, German and Spanish. If there is any divergence in the wording, the English text is authoritative.

Other languages

National FAs which translate the Laws of the Game can obtain the layout template for the 2020/21 edition of the Laws from The IFAB by contacting: **info@theifab.com.**

National FAs which produce a translated version of the Laws of the Game using this format are invited to send a copy to The IFAB (stating clearly on the front cover that it is that national FA's official translation) so it can be posted on The IFAB website for use by others.

Applying the Laws

The same Laws apply in every match in every confederation, country, town and village and, apart from the Modifications permitted by The IFAB (see 'Modifications to the Laws'), the Laws must not be modified or changed, except with the permission of The IFAB.

Those who are educating match officials and other participants, should emphasise that:

- referees should apply the Laws within the 'spirit' of the game to help produce fair and safe matches
- everyone must respect the match officials and their decisions, remembering and respecting that referees are human and will make mistakes

Players have a major responsibility for the image of the game and the team captain should play an important role in helping to ensure that the Laws and referees' decisions are respected.

Key

The main Law changes are underlined in yellow and highlighted in the margin.
Editorial changes are underlined.
YC = yellow card (caution); RC = red card (sending-off).

Laws of the Game 2020/21

Modifications to the Laws

The universality of the Laws of the Game means that the game is essentially the same in every part of the world and at every level. As well as creating a 'fair' and safe environment in which the game is played, the Laws should also promote participation and enjoyment.

Historically, The IFAB has allowed national football associations (FAs) some flexibility to modify the 'organisational' Laws for specific categories of football. However, The IFAB strongly believes that national FAs should now be given more options to modify aspects of the way football is organised if it will benefit football in their own country.

How the game is played and refereed should be the same on every football field in the world from the FIFA World Cup™ final to the smallest village. However, the needs of a country's domestic football should determine how long the game lasts, how many people can take part and how some unfair behaviour is punished.

Consequently, the 131st AGM of The IFAB held in London on 3rd March 2017 unanimously agreed that national FAs (and confederations and FIFA) now have the option to modify all or some of the following organisational areas of the Laws of the Game for football for which they are responsible:

For youth, veterans, disability and grassroots football:

- size of the field of play
- size, weight and material of the ball
- width between the goalposts and height of the crossbar from the ground
- duration of the two (equal) halves of the game (and two equal halves of extra time)
- the use of return substitutes
- the use of temporary dismissals (sin bins) for some/all cautions (YCs)

For any level except competitions involving the 1st team of clubs in the top division or 'A' international teams:

- the number of substitutions each team is permitted to use up to a maximum of five, except in youth football where the maximum will be determined by the national association, confederation or FIFA

In addition, to allow national FAs further flexibility to benefit and develop their domestic football, The IFAB AGM approved the following changes relating to 'categories' of football:

- women's football is no longer a separate category and now has the same status as men's football
- the age limits for youth and veterans have been removed – national FAs, confederations and FIFA have the flexibility to decide the age restrictions for these categories
- each national FA will determine which competitions at the lowest levels of football are designated as 'grassroots' football

Permission for other modifications

National FAs have the option to approve different modifications for different competitions - there is no requirement to apply them universally or to apply them all. **However, no other modifications are allowed without the permission of The IFAB.**

National FAs are asked to inform The IFAB of their use of these modifications, and at which levels, as this information, and especially the reason(s) why the modifications are being used, may identify development ideas/strategies which The IFAB can share to assist the development of football in other national FAs.

The IFAB would also be very interested to hear about other potential modifications to the Laws of the Game which could increase participation, make football more attractive and promote its worldwide development.

Guidelines for temporary dismissals (sin bins)

The 131st AGM of The IFAB held in London on 3rd March 2017 approved the use of temporary dismissals (sin bins) for all or some cautions/yellow cards (YCs) in youth, veterans, disability and grassroots football, subject to the approval of the competition's national FA, confederation or FIFA, whichever is appropriate.

Reference to temporary dismissals is found in:

Law 5 – The Referee (Powers and duties):
Disciplinary action
The referee has the power to show yellow or red cards and, where competition rules permit, temporarily dismiss a player, from entering the field at the start of the match until after the match has ended, including during the half-time interval, extra time and kicks from the penalty mark.

A temporary dismissal is when a player commits a cautionable (YC) offence and is punished by an immediate 'suspension' from participating in the next part of that match. The philosophy is that an 'instant punishment' can have a significant and immediate positive influence on the behaviour of the offending player and, potentially, the player's team.

The national FA, confederation or FIFA should approve (for publication in the competition rules) a temporary dismissal protocol within the following guidelines:

Players only

- Temporary dismissals apply to all players (including goalkeepers) but not for cautionable offences (YCs) committed by a substitute or substituted player

Referee's signal

- The referee will indicate a temporary dismissal by showing a yellow card (YC) and then clearly pointing with both arms to the temporary dismissal area (usually the player's technical area)

The temporary dismissal period

- The length of the temporary dismissal is the same for all offences
- The length of the temporary dismissal should be between 10–15% of the total playing time (e.g. 10 minutes in a 90-minute match; 8 minutes in an 80-minute match)
- The temporary dismissal period begins when play restarts after the player has left the field of play
- The referee should include in the temporary dismissal period any time 'lost' for a stoppage for which 'additional time' will be allowed at the end of the half (e.g. substitution, injury etc...)
- Competitions must decide who will help the referee time the dismissal period – it could be the responsibility of a delegate, 4th official or neutral assistant referee; conversely it could be a team official
- Once the temporary dismissal period has been completed, the player can return from the touchline with the referee's permission, which can be given while the ball is in play
- The referee has the final decision as to when the player can return
- A temporarily dismissed player cannot be substituted until the end of the temporary dismissal period (but not if the team has used all its permitted substitutes)
- If a temporary dismissal period has not been completed at the end of the first half (or the end of the second half when extra time is to be played) the remaining part of the temporary dismissal period is served from the start of the second half (start of extra time)
- A player who is still serving a temporary dismissal at the end of the match is permitted to take part in kicks from the penalty mark (penalties)

Temporary dismissal area

- A temporarily dismissed player should remain within the technical area (where one exists) or with the team's coach/technical staff, unless 'warming up' (under the same conditions as a substitute)

Offences during a temporary dismissal

- A temporarily dismissed player who commits a cautionable (YC) or sending-off (RC) offence during their temporary dismissal period will take no further part in the match and may not be replaced or substituted

Further disciplinary action

- Competitions/national FAs will decide if temporary dismissals must be reported to the appropriate authorities and whether any further disciplinary action may be taken e.g. suspension for accumulating a number of temporary dismissals, as with cautions (YCs)

Temporary dismissal systems

A competition may use one of the following temporary dismissal systems:

- System A – for all cautions (YCs)
- System B – for some but not all cautions (YCs)

System A – temporary dismissal for all cautions (YCs)

- All cautions (YCs) are punished with a temporary dismissal
- A player who receives a second caution (YC) in the same match:
  - will receive a second temporary dismissal and then takes no further part in the match
  - may be replaced by a substitute at the end of the second temporary dismissal period if the player's team has not used its maximum number of substitutes (this is because the team has already been 'punished' by playing without that player for 2 x temporary dismissal periods)

System B – temporary dismissal for some but not all cautions (YCs)*

- A pre-defined list of cautionable (YC) offences will be punished by a temporary dismissal
- All other cautionable offences are punished with a caution (YC)
- A player who has been temporarily dismissed and then receives a caution (YC) continues playing
- A player who has received a caution (YC) and then receives a temporary dismissal can continue playing after the end of the temporary dismissal period
- A player who receives a second temporary dismissal in the same match will serve the temporary dismissal and then takes no further part in the match. The player may be replaced by a substitute at the end of the second temporary dismissal period if the player's team has not used its maximum number of substitutes but a player who has also received a non-temporary dismissal caution (YC) may not be replaced or substituted
- A player who receives a second caution (YC) in the same match will be sent off and takes no further part in the match and may not be replaced/ substituted

**Some competitions may find it valuable to use temporary dismissals only for cautions (YCs) for offences relating to 'inappropriate' behaviour, e.g.*

- *Simulation*
- *Deliberately delaying the opposing team's restart of the match*
- *Dissent or verbal comments or gestures*
- *Stopping or interfering with a promising attack by holding, pulling, pushing or handball*
- *Kicker illegally feinting at a penalty kick*

Guidelines for return substitutes

Following approval at the 131st AGM of The IFAB held in London on 3rd March 2017 the Laws of the Game now permit the use of return substitutes in youth, veterans, disability and grassroots football, subject to the approval of the competition's national FA, confederation or FIFA, whichever is appropriate.

Reference to return substitutions is found in:

Law 3 – The Players (Number of substitutions):
Return substitutions

- The use of return substitutions is only permitted in youth, veterans, disability and grassroots football, subject to the agreement of the national football association, confederation or FIFA.

A 'return substitute' is a player who has already played in the match and has been substituted (a substituted player) and later in the match returns to play by replacing another player.

Apart from the dispensation for a substituted player to return to play in the match, all other provisions of Law 3 and the Laws of the Game apply to return substitutes. In particular, the substitution procedure outlined in Law 3 must be followed.

Law

01

The Field of Play

1. **Field surface**

   The field of play must be a wholly natural or, if competition rules permit, a wholly artificial playing surface except where competition rules permit an integrated combination of artificial and natural materials (hybrid system).

   The colour of artificial surfaces must be green.

   Where artificial surfaces are used in competition matches between representative teams of national football associations affiliated to FIFA or international club competition matches, the surface must meet the requirements of the FIFA Quality Programme for Football Turf or the International Match Standard, unless special dispensation is given by The IFAB.

2. **Field markings**

   The field of play must be rectangular and marked with continuous lines which must not be dangerous; artificial playing surface material may be used for the field markings on natural fields if it is not dangerous. These lines belong to the areas of which they are boundaries.

   Only the lines indicated in Law 1 are to be marked on the field of play. Where artificial surfaces are used, other lines are permitted provided they are a different colour and clearly distinguishable from the football lines.

   The two longer boundary lines are touchlines. The two shorter lines are goal lines.

   The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line, which joins the midpoints of the two touchlines.

   The centre mark is at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of 9.15 m (10 yds) is marked around it.

Marks may be made off the field of play 9.15 m (10 yds) from the corner arc at right angles to the goal lines and the touchlines.

All lines must be of the same width, which must not be more than 12 cm (5 ins). The goal lines must be of the same width as the goalposts and the crossbar.

A player who makes unauthorised marks on the field of play must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour. If the referee notices this being done during the match, the player is cautioned when the ball next goes out of play.

3. Dimensions

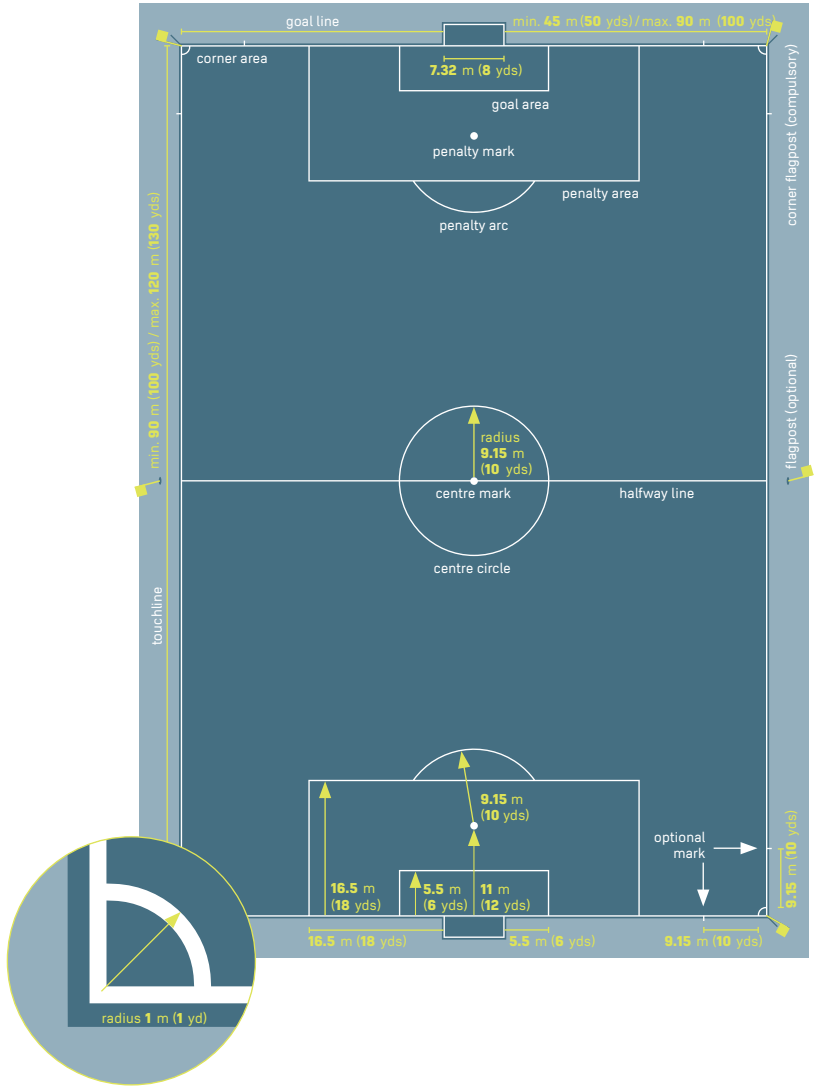
The touchline must be longer than the goal line.

- Length (touchline):
  minimum 90 m (100 yds)
  maximum 120 m (130 yds)
- Length (goal line):
  minimum 45 m (50 yds)
  maximum 90 m (100 yds)

4. Dimensions for international matches

- Length (touchline):
  minimum 100 m (110 yds)
  maximum 110 m (120 yds)
- Length (goal line):
  minimum 64 m (70 yds)
  maximum 75 m (80 yds)

Competitions may determine the length of the goal line and touchline within the above dimensions.



- Measurements are from the outside of the lines as the lines are part of the area they enclose.
- The penalty mark is measured from the centre of the mark to the back edge of the goal line.

5. The goal area

Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 5.5 m (6 yds) from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for 5.5 m (6 yds) and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the goal area.

6. The penalty area

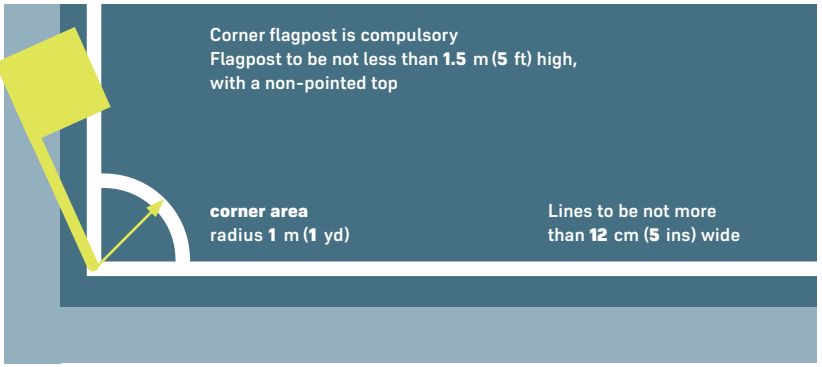
Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 16.5 m (18 yds) from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for 16.5 m (18 yds) and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the penalty area.

Within each penalty area, a penalty mark is made 11 m (12 yds) from the midpoint between the goalposts.

An arc of a circle with a radius of 9.15 m (10 yds) from the centre of each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

7. The corner area

The corner area is defined by a quarter circle with a radius of 1 m (1 yd) from each corner flagpost drawn inside the field of play.



8. Flagposts

A flagpost, at least 1.5 m (5 ft) high, with a non-pointed top and a flag must be placed at each corner.

Flagposts may be placed at each end of the halfway line, at least 1 m (1 yd) outside the touchline.

9. The technical area

The technical area relates to matches played in stadiums with a designated sitting area for team officials, substitutes and substituted players as outlined below:

- the technical area should only extend 1 m (1 yd) on either side of the designated seated area and up to a distance of 1 m (1 yd) from the touchline
- markings should be used to define the area
- the number of persons permitted to occupy the technical area is defined by the competition rules
- the occupants of the technical area:
  - are identified before the start of the match in accordance with the competition rules
  - must behave in a responsible manner
  - must remain within its confines except in special circumstances, e.g. a physiotherapist/doctor entering the field of play, with the referee's permission, to assess an injured player
- only one person at a time is authorised to convey tactical instructions from the technical area

10. Goals

A goal must be placed on the centre of each goal line.
A goal consists of two vertical posts equidistant from the corner flagposts and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The goalposts and crossbar must be made of approved material. They must be square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a combination of these shapes and must not be dangerous.

The distance between the inside of the posts is 7.32 m (8 yds) and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is 2.44 m (8 ft).

The position of the goalposts in relation to the goal line must be in accordance with the graphics.

The goalposts and the crossbar must be white and have the same width and depth, which must not exceed 12 cm (5 ins).

If the crossbar becomes displaced or broken, play is stopped until it has been repaired or replaced in position. Play is restarted with a dropped ball. If it can not be repaired the match must be abandoned. A rope or any flexible or dangerous material may not replace the crossbar.

Nets may be attached to the goals and the ground behind the goal; they must be properly supported and must not interfere with the goalkeeper.

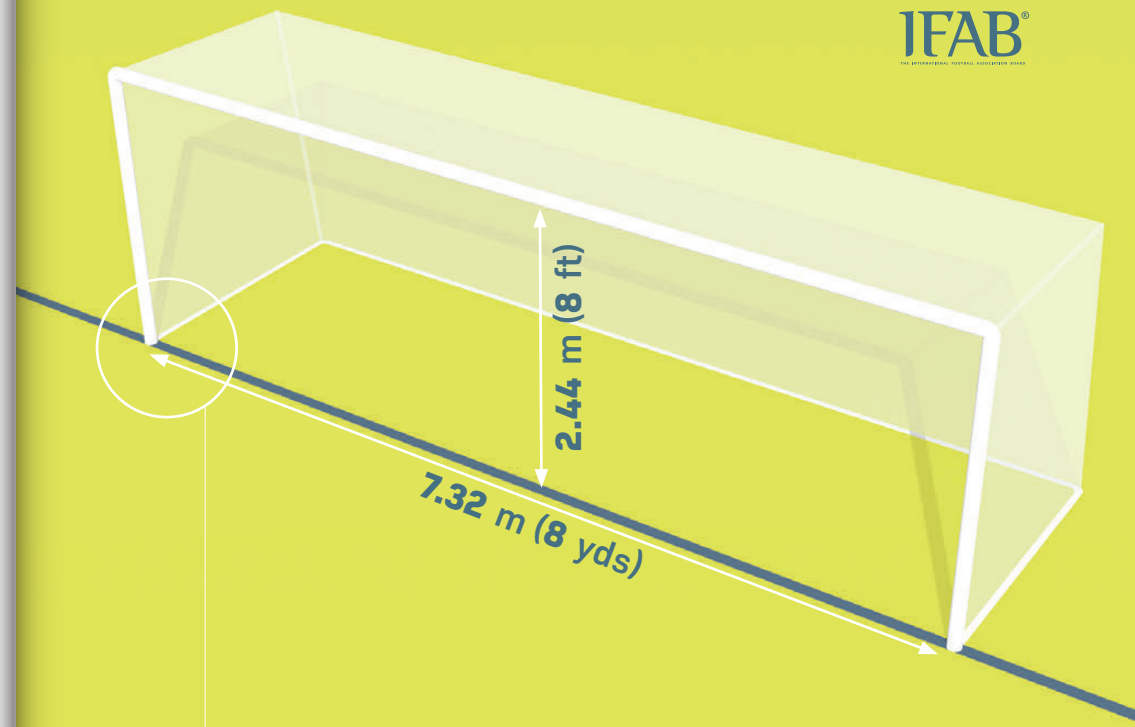
Safety

Goals (including portable goals) must be firmly secured to the ground.

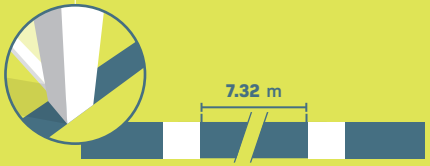
11. Goal line technology (GLT)

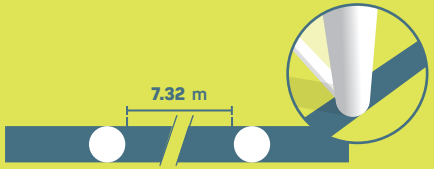
GLT systems may be used to verify whether a goal has been scored to support the referee's decision.

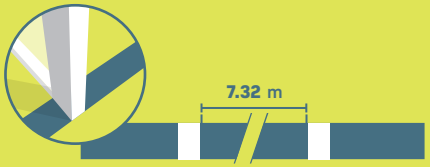
Where GLT is used, modifications to the goal frame may be permitted in accordance with the specifications stipulated in the FIFA Quality Programme for GLT and with the Laws of the Game. The use of GLT must be stipulated in the competition rules.

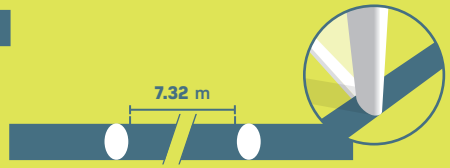


The position of the goalposts in relation to the goal line must be in accordance with the graphics below.









Principles of GLT

GLT applies solely to the goal line and is only used to determine whether a goal has been scored.

The indication of whether a goal has been scored must be immediate and automatically confirmed within one second by the GLT system only to the match officials (via the referee's watch, by vibration and visual signal).

Requirements and specifications of GLT

If GLT is used in competition matches, the competition organisers must ensure that the system is certified according to one of the following standards:

- FIFA Quality PRO
- FIFA Quality
- IMS - INTERNATIONAL MATCH STANDARD

An independent testing institute must verify the accuracy and functionality of the different technology providers' systems in accordance with the FIFA Quality Programme for GLT Testing Manual. If the technology does not function in accordance with the Testing Manual, the referee must not use the GLT system and must report this to the appropriate authorities.

Where GLT is used, the referee must test the technology's functionality before the match as set out in the Testing Manual.

12. Commercial advertising

No form of commercial advertising, whether real or virtual, is permitted on the field of play, on the ground within the area enclosed by the goal nets, the technical area or the referee review area (RRA), or on the ground within 1 m (1 yd) of the boundary lines from the time the teams enter the field of play until they have left it at half-time and from the time the teams re-enter the field of play until the end of the match. Advertising is not permitted on the goals, nets, flagposts or their flags and no extraneous equipment (cameras, microphones, etc.) may be attached to these items.

In addition, upright advertising must be at least:

- 1 m (1 yd) from the touchlines
- the same distance from the goal line as the depth of the goal net
- 1 m (1 yd) from the goal net

13. Logos and emblems

The reproduction, whether real or virtual, of representative logos or emblems of FIFA, confederations, national football associations, competitions, clubs or other bodies is forbidden on the field of play, the goal nets and the areas they enclose, the goals, and the flagposts during playing time. They are permitted on the flags on the flagposts.

14. Video assistant referees (VARs)

In matches using VARs there must be a video operation room (VOR) and at least one referee review area (RRA).

Video operation room (VOR)

The VOR is where the video assistant referee (VAR), assistant VAR (AVAR) and replay operator (RO) work; it may be in/close to the stadium or at a more distant location. Only authorised persons are permitted to enter the VOR or communicate with the VAR, AVAR and RO during the match.

A player, substitute, substituted player or team official who enters the VOR will be sent off.

Referee review area (RRA)

In matches using VARs there must be at least one RRA where the referee undertakes an 'on-field review' (OFR). The RRA must be:

- in a visible location outside the field of play
- clearly marked

A player, substitute, substituted player or team official who enters the RRA will be cautioned.

IFAB

Law

02

IFAB

The Ball

1. Qualities and measurements

All balls must be:

- spherical
- made of suitable material
- of a circumference of between 68 cm (27 ins) and 70 cm (28 ins)
- between 410 g (14 oz) and 450 g (16 oz) in weight at the start of the match
- of a pressure equal to 0.6–1.1 atmosphere (600–1,100 g/cm^2) at sea level (8.5 lbs/sq in–15.6 lbs/sq in)

All balls used in matches played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA or confederations must bear one of the following:

- FIFA Quality PRO
- FIFA Quality
- IMS - INTERNATIONAL MATCH STANDARD

Each mark indicates that the ball has been officially tested and meets the specific technical requirements for that mark which are additional to the minimum specifications stipulated in Law 2 and must be approved by The IFAB. The institutes conducting the tests are subject to the approval of FIFA.

Where goal line technology (GLT) is used, balls with integrated technology must carry one of the above-listed quality marks.

National FA competitions may require the use of balls bearing one of these marks.

In matches played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA, confederations or national FAs, no form of commercial advertising is permitted on the ball, except for the logo/emblem of the competition, the competition organiser and the authorised manufacturer's trademark. The competition regulations may restrict the size and number of such markings.

2. Replacement of a defective ball

If the ball becomes defective:

- play is stopped and
- restarted with a dropped ball

If the ball becomes defective at a kick-off, goal kick, corner kick, free kick, penalty kick or throw-in, the restart is retaken.

If the ball becomes defective during a penalty kick or kicks from the penalty mark as it moves forward and before it touches a player, crossbar or goalposts the penalty kick is retaken.

The ball may not be changed during the match without the referee's permission.

3. Additional balls

Additional balls which meet the requirements of Law 2 may be placed around the field of play and their use is under the referee's control.

IFAB

Law 03

IFAB

The Players

1. Number of players

A match is played by two teams, each with a maximum of eleven players; one must be the goalkeeper. A match may not start or continue if either team has fewer than seven players.

If a team has fewer than seven players because one or more players has deliberately left the field of play, the referee is not obliged to stop play and the advantage may be played, but the match must not resume after the ball has gone out of play if a team does not have the minimum number of seven players.

If the competition rules state that all players and substitutes must be named before kick-off and a team starts a match with fewer than eleven players, only the players and substitutes named on the team list may take part in the match upon their arrival.

2. Number of substitutions

Official competitions

The number of substitutes, up to a maximum of five, which may be used in any match played in an official competition will be determined by FIFA, the confederation or the national football association except for men's and women's competitions involving the 1st teams of clubs in the top division or senior 'A' international teams, where the maximum is three substitutes.

The competition rules must state:

- how many substitutes may be named, from three to a maximum of twelve
- whether one additional substitute may be used when a match goes into extra time (whether or not the team has already used the full number of permitted substitutes)

Other matches

In national 'A' team matches, a maximum of twelve substitutes may be named of which a maximum of six may be used.

In all other matches, a greater number of substitutes may be used provided that:

- the teams reach agreement on a maximum number
- the referee is informed before the match

If the referee is not informed, or if no agreement is reached before the match, each team is allowed a maximum of six substitutes.

Return substitutions

The use of return substitutions is only permitted in youth, veterans, disability and grassroots football, subject to the agreement of the national football association, confederation or FIFA.

3. Substitution procedure

The names of the substitutes must be given to the referee before the start of the match. Any substitute not named by this time may not take part in the match.

To replace a player with a substitute, the following must be observed:

- the referee must be informed before any substitution is made
- the player being substituted:
  - receives the referee's permission to leave the field of play, unless already off the field, and must leave by the nearest point on the boundary line unless the referee indicates that the player may leave directly and immediately at the halfway line or another point (e.g. for safety/security or injury)
  - must go immediately to the technical area or dressing room and takes no further part in the match, except where return substitutions are permitted
- if a player who is to be substituted refuses to leave, play continues

The substitute only enters:

- during a stoppage in play
- at the halfway line
- after the player being replaced has left
- after receiving a signal from the referee

The substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play; from that moment, the replaced player becomes a substituted player and the substitute becomes a player and can take any restart.

All substituted players and substitutes are subject to the referee's authority whether they play or not.

4. Changing the goalkeeper

Any of the players may change places with the goalkeeper if:

- the referee is informed before the change is made
- the change is made during a stoppage in play

5. Offences and sanctions

If a named substitute starts a match instead of a named player and the referee is not informed of this change:

- the referee allows the named substitute to continue playing
- no disciplinary action may be taken against the named substitute
- the named player can become a named substitute
- the number of substitutions is not reduced
- the referee reports the incident to the appropriate authorities

If a substitution is made during the half-time interval or before extra time, the procedure must be completed before the match restarts. If the referee is not informed, the named substitute may continue to play, no disciplinary action is taken and the matter is reported to the appropriate authorities.

If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission, the referee:

- allows play to continue
- cautions both players when the ball is next out of play but not if the change occurred during half-time (including half-time of extra time) or the period between the end of the match and the start of extra time and/or kicks from the penalty mark

For any other offences:

- the players are cautioned
- play is restarted with an indirect free kick, from the position of the ball when play was stopped

6. Players and substitutes sent off

A player who is sent off:

- before submission of the team list cannot be named on the team list in any capacity
- after being named on the team list and before kick-off may be replaced by a named substitute, who cannot be replaced; the number of substitutions the team can make is not reduced
- after the kick-off cannot be replaced

A named substitute who is sent off before or after the kick-off may not be replaced.

7. Extra persons on the field of play

The coach and other officials named on the team list (with the exception of players or substitutes) are team officials. Anyone not named on the team list as a player, substitute or team official is an outside agent.

If a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or outside agent enters the field of play, the referee must:

- only stop play if there is interference with play
- have the person removed when play stops
- take appropriate disciplinary action

If play is stopped and the interference was by:

- a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, play restarts with a direct free kick or penalty kick
- an outside agent, play restarts with a dropped ball

If a ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent a defending player playing the ball, the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the interference was by the attacking team.

8. Player outside the field of play

If a player who requires the referee's permission to re-enter the field of play re-enters without the referee's permission, the referee must:

- stop play (not immediately if the player does not interfere with play or a match official or if the advantage can be applied)
- caution the player for entering the field of play without permission

If the referee stops play, it must be restarted:

- with a direct free kick from the position of the interference
- with an indirect free kick from the position of the ball when play was stopped if there was no interference

A player who crosses a boundary line as part of a playing movement does not commit an offence.

9. Goal scored with an extra person on the field of play

If, after a goal is scored, the referee realises, before play restarts, that an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored:

- the referee must disallow the goal if the extra person was:
  - a player, substitute, substituted player, sent-off player or team official of the team that scored the goal; play is restarted with a direct free kick from the position of the extra person
  - an outside agent who interfered with play unless a goal results as outlined above in 'extra persons on the field of play'; play is restarted with a dropped ball
- the referee must allow the goal if the extra person was:
  - a player, substitute, substituted player, sent-off player or team official of the team that conceded the goal
  - an outside agent who did not interfere with play

In all cases, the referee must have the extra person removed from the field of play.

If, after a goal is scored and play has restarted, the referee realises an extra person was on the field of play when the goal was scored, the goal cannot be disallowed. If the extra person is still on the field the referee must:

- stop play
- have the extra person removed
- restart with a dropped ball or free kick as appropriate

The referee must report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

10. Team captain

The team captain has no special status or privileges but has a degree of responsibility for the behaviour of the team.

IFAB

Law 04

IFAB

The Players' Equipment

1. Safety

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous.

All items of jewellery (necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.) are forbidden and must be removed. Using tape to cover jewellery is not permitted.

The players must be inspected before the start of the match and substitutes before they enter the field of play. If a player is wearing or using unauthorised/dangerous equipment or jewellery, the referee must order the player to:

- remove the item
- leave the field of play at the next stoppage if the player is unable or unwilling to comply

A player who refuses to comply or wears the item again must be cautioned.

2. Compulsory equipment

The compulsory equipment of a player comprises the following separate items:

- a shirt with sleeves
- shorts
- socks – tape or any material applied or worn externally must be the same colour as that part of the sock it is applied to or covers
- shinguards – these must be made of a suitable material to provide reasonable protection and covered by the socks
- footwear

Goalkeepers may wear tracksuit bottoms.

A player whose footwear or shinguard is lost accidentally must replace it as soon as possible and no later than when the ball next goes out of play; if before doing so the player plays the ball and/or scores a goal, the goal is awarded.

3. Colours

- The two teams must wear colours that distinguish them from each other and the match officials
- Each goalkeeper must wear colours that are distinguishable from the other players and the match officials
- If the two goalkeepers' shirts are the same colour and neither has another shirt, the referee allows the match to be played

Undershirts must be:

- a single colour which is the same colour as the main colour of the shirt sleeve

or

- a pattern/colours which exactly replicate(s) the shirt sleeve

Undershorts/tights must be the same colour as the main colour of the shorts or the lowest part of the shorts – players of the same team must wear the same colour.

4. Other equipment

Non-dangerous protective equipment, for example headgear, facemasks and knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material is permitted as are goalkeepers' caps and sports spectacles.

Head covers

Where head covers (excluding goalkeepers' caps) are worn, they must:

- be black or the same main colour as the shirt (provided that the players of the same team wear the same colour)
- be in keeping with the professional appearance of the player's equipment
- not be attached to the shirt
- not be dangerous to the player wearing it or any other player (e.g. opening/closing mechanism around neck)
- not have any part(s) extending out from the surface (protruding elements)

Electronic communication

Players (including substitutes/substituted and sent-off players) are not permitted to wear or use any form of electronic or communication equipment (except where EPTS is allowed). The use of any form of electronic communication by team officials is permitted where it directly relates to player welfare or safety or for tactical/coaching reasons but only small, mobile, handheld equipment (e.g. microphone, headphone, earpiece, mobile phone/smartphone, smartwatch, tablet, laptop) may be used. A team official who uses unauthorised equipment or who behaves in an inappropriate manner as a result of the use of electronic or communication equipment will be sent off.

Electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS)

Where wearable technology (WT) as part of electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS) is used in matches played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA, confederations or national football associations, the competition organiser must ensure that the technology attached to the players' equipment is not dangerous and meets one of the following standards: IMS (International Match Standard) or FIFA Quality.

The institutes conducting these tests are subject to the approval of FIFA.

Where EPTS are provided by the match or competition organiser, it is the responsibility of that match or competition organiser to ensure that the information and data transmitted from EPTS to the technical area during matches played in an official competition are reliable and accurate.

A professional standard was developed by FIFA and approved by The IFAB in order to support the competition organisers with the approval process of reliable and accurate electronic performance and tracking systems.

The following mark indicates that an EPTS (wearable or optical) has been officially tested to the requirements in terms of reliability and accuracy of positional data in football:

5. Slogans, statements, images and advertising

Equipment must not have any political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images. Players must not reveal undergarments that show political, religious, personal slogans, statements or images, or advertising other than the manufacturer's logo. For any offence the player and/or the team will be sanctioned by the competition organiser, national football association or by FIFA.

Principles

- Law 4 applies to all equipment (including clothing) worn by players, substitutes and substituted players; its principles also apply to all team officials in the technical area
- The following are (usually) permitted:
  - the player's number, name, team crest/logo, initiative slogans/emblems promoting the game of football, respect and integrity as well as any advertising permitted by competition rules or national FA, confederation or FIFA regulations
  - the facts of a match: teams, date, competition/event, venue
- Permitted slogans, statements or images should be confined to the shirt front and/or armband
- In some cases, the slogan, statement or image might only appear on the captain's armband

Interpreting the Law

When interpreting whether a slogan, statement or image is permissible, note should be taken of Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct), which requires the referee to take action against a player who is guilty of:

- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- gesturing in a provocative, derisory or inflammatory way

Any slogan, statement or image which falls into any of these categories is not permitted.

Whilst 'religious' and 'personal' are relatively easily defined, 'political' is less clear but slogans, statements or images related to the following are not permitted:

- any person(s), living or dead (unless part of the official competition name)
- any local, regional, national or international political party/organisation/group, etc.
- any local, regional or national government or any of its departments, offices or functions
- any organisation which is discriminatory
- any organisation whose aims/actions are likely to offend a notable number of people
- any specific political act/event

When commemorating a significant national or international event, the sensibilities of the opposing team (including its supporters) and the general public should be carefully considered.

Competition rules may contain further restrictions/limitations, particularly in relation to the size, number and position of permitted slogans, statements and images. It is recommended that disputes relating to slogans, statements or images be resolved prior to a match/competition taking place.

6. Offences and sanctions

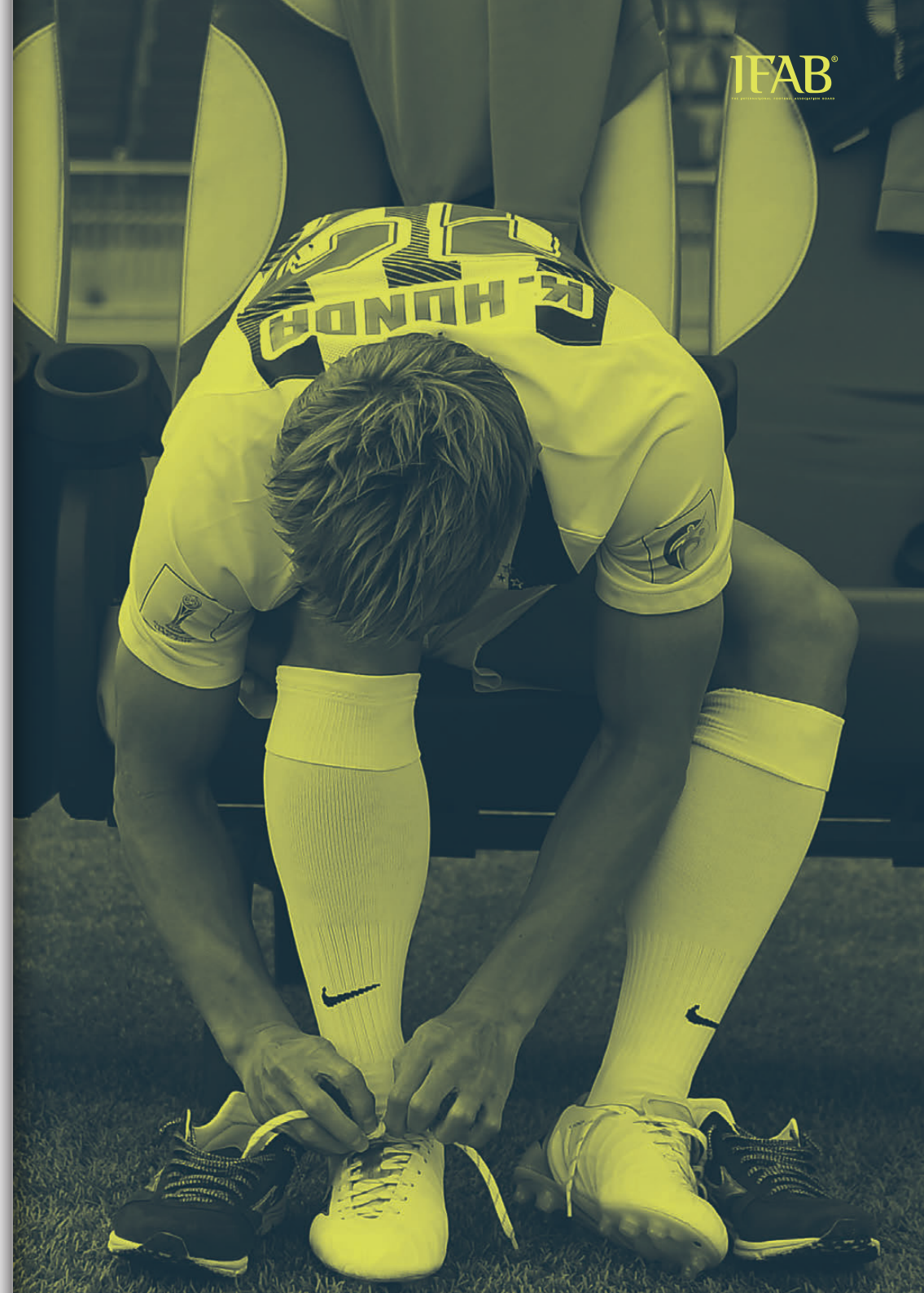
For any offence, play need not be stopped and the player:

- is instructed by the referee to leave the field of play to correct the equipment
- leaves when play stops, unless the equipment has already been corrected

A player who leaves the field of play to correct or change equipment must:

- have the equipment checked by a match official before being allowed to re-enter
- only re-enter with the referee's permission (which may be given during play)

A player who enters without permission must be cautioned, and if play is stopped to issue the caution, an indirect free kick is awarded from the position of the ball when play was stopped, unless there was interference, in which case a direct free kick (or penalty kick) is awarded from the position of the interference.



IFAB

Law 05

IFAB

The Referee

1. The authority of the referee

Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match.

2. Decisions of the referee

Decisions will be made to the best of the referee's ability according to the Laws of the Game and the 'spirit of the game' and will be based on the opinion of the referee, who has the discretion to take appropriate action within the framework of the Laws of the Game.

The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether or not a goal is scored and the result of the match, are final. The decisions of the referee, and all other match officials, must always be respected.

The referee may not change a restart decision on realising that it is incorrect or on the advice of another match official if play has restarted or the referee has signalled the end of the first or second half (including extra time) and left the field of play or abandoned the match. However, if at the end of the half, the referee leaves the field of play to go to the referee review area (RRA) or to instruct the players to return to the field of play, this does not prevent a decision being changed for an incident which occurred before the end of the half.

Except as outlined in Law 12.3 and the VAR protocol, a disciplinary sanction may only be issued after play has restarted if another match official had identified and attempted to communicate the offence to the referee before play restarted; the restart associated with the sanction does not apply.

If a referee is incapacitated, play may continue under the supervision of the other match officials until the ball is next out of play.

3. Powers and duties

The referee:

- enforces the Laws of the Game
- controls the match in cooperation with the other match officials
- acts as timekeeper, keeps a record of the match and provides the appropriate authorities with a match report, including information on disciplinary action and any other incidents that occurred before, during or after the match
- supervises and/or indicates the restart of play

Advantage

- allows play to continue when an offence occurs and the non-offending team will benefit from the advantage, and penalises the offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time or within a few seconds

Disciplinary action

- punishes the more serious offence, in terms of sanction, restart, physical severity and tactical impact, when more than one offence occurs at the same time
- takes disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and sending-off offences
- has the authority to take disciplinary action from entering the field of play for the pre-match inspection until leaving the field of play after the match ends (including kicks from the penalty mark). If, before entering the field of play at the start of the match, a player commits a sending-off offence, the referee has the authority to prevent the player taking part in the match (see Law 3.6); the referee will report any other misconduct
- has the power to show yellow or red cards and, where competition rules permit, temporarily dismiss a player, from entering the field of play at the start of the match until after the match has ended, including during the half-time interval, extra time and kicks from the penalty mark
- takes action against team officials who fail to act in a responsible manner and warns or shows a yellow card for a caution or a red card for a sending-off from the field of play and its immediate surrounds, including the technical area; if the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction. A medical team official who commits a sending-off offence may remain if the team has no other medical person available, and act if a player needs medical attention
- acts on the advice of other match officials regarding incidents that the referee has not seen

Injuries

- allows play to continue until the ball is out of play if a player is only slightly injured
- stops play if a player is seriously injured and ensures that the player is removed from the field of play. An injured player may not be treated on the field of play and may only re-enter after play has restarted; if the ball is in play, re-entry must be from the touchline but if the ball is out of play, it may be from any boundary line. Exceptions to the requirement to leave the field of play are only when:
  - a goalkeeper is injured
  - a goalkeeper and an outfield player have collided and need attention
  - players from the same team have collided and need attention
  - a severe injury has occurred
  - a player is injured as the result of a physical offence for which the opponent is cautioned or sent off (e.g. reckless or serious foul challenge), if the assessment/treatment is completed quickly
  - a penalty kick has been awarded and the injured player will be the kicker
- ensures that any player bleeding leaves the field of play. The player may only re-enter on receiving a signal from the referee, who must be satisfied that the bleeding has stopped and there is no blood on the equipment
- if the referee has authorised the doctors and/or stretcher bearers to enter the field of play the player must leave on a stretcher or on foot. A player who does not comply must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour
- if the referee has decided to caution or send off a player who is injured and has to leave the field of play for treatment, the card must be shown before the player leaves
- if play has not been stopped for another reason, or if an injury suffered by a player is not the result of an offence, play is restarted with a dropped ball

Outside interference

- stops, suspends or abandons the match for any offences or because of outside interference e.g. if:
  - the floodlights are inadequate
  - an object thrown by a spectator hits a match official, a player or team official, the referee may allow the match to continue, or stop, suspend or abandon it depending on the severity of the incident
  - a spectator blows a whistle which interferes with play – play is stopped and restarted with a dropped ball
  - an extra ball, other object or animal enters the field of play during the match, the referee must:
    - stop play (and restart with a dropped ball) only if it interferes with play – unless the ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent a defending player playing the ball; the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the interference was by the attacking team
    - allow play to continue if it does not interfere with play and have it removed at the earliest possible opportunity
- allows no unauthorised persons to enter the field of play

4. Video assistant referee (VAR)

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all the VAR protocol and implementation requirements (as set out in the VAR Handbook) and has received written permission from The IFAB and FIFA.

The referee may be assisted by a video assistant referee (VAR) only in the event of a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' in relation to:

- goal/no goal
- penalty/no penalty
- direct red card (not second caution)
- mistaken identity when the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player of the offending team

The assistance from the video assistant referee (VAR) will relate to using replay(s) of the incident. The referee will make the final decision which may be based solely on the information from the VAR and/or the referee reviewing the replay footage directly ('on-field review').

Except for a 'serious missed incident', the referee (and where relevant other 'on-field' match officials) must always make a decision (including a decision not to penalise a potential offence); this decision does not change unless it is a 'clear and obvious error'.

Reviews after play has restarted

If play has stopped and restarted, the referee may only undertake a 'review', and take the appropriate disciplinary sanction, for mistaken identity or for a potential sending-off offence relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive gesture(s).

5. Referee's equipment

Compulsory equipment

Referees must have the following equipment:

- Whistle(s)
- Watch(es)
- Red and yellow cards
- Notebook (or other means of keeping a record of the match)

Other equipment

Referees may be permitted to use:

- Equipment for communicating with other match officials – buzzer/beep flags, headsets etc.
- EPTS or other fitness monitoring equipment

Referees and other 'on-field' match officials are prohibited from wearing jewellery or any other electronic equipment, including cameras.

6. Referee signals

Refer to graphics for approved referee signals.

Penalty kick

Indirect free kick

Direct free kick

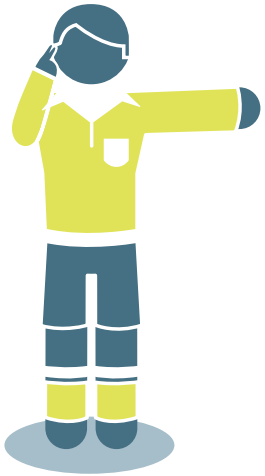
Advantage (1)

Advantage (2)

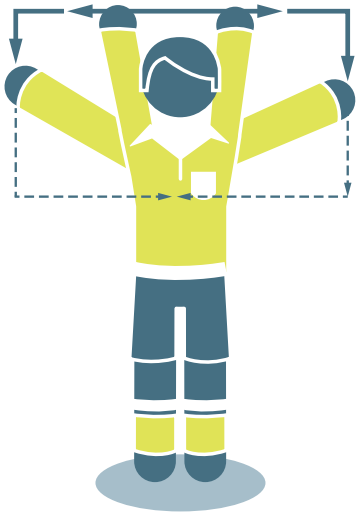
Corner kick

Goal kick

Red and **yellow** card



Check finger to ear, other hand/arm extended



Review "TV signal"

7. Liability of match officials

A referee or other match official is not held liable for:

- any kind of injury suffered by a player, official or spectator
- any damage to property of any kind
- any other loss suffered by any individual, club, company, association or other body, which is due or which may be due to any decision taken under the terms of the Laws of the Game or in respect of the normal procedures required to hold, play and control a match

Such decisions may include a decision:

- that the condition of the field of play or its surrounds or that the weather conditions are such as to allow or not to allow a match to take place
- to abandon a match for whatever reason
- as to the suitability of the field equipment and ball used during a match
- to stop or not to stop a match due to spectator interference or any problem in spectator areas
- to stop or not to stop play to allow an injured player to be removed from the field of play for treatment
- to require an injured player to be removed from the field of play for treatment
- to allow or not to allow a player to wear certain clothing or equipment
- where the referee has the authority, to allow or not to allow any persons (including team or stadium officials, security officers, photographers or other media representatives) to be present in the vicinity of the field of play
- any other decision taken in accordance with the Laws of the Game or in conformity with their duties under the terms of FIFA, confederation, national football association or competition rules or regulations under which the match is played

IFAB

Law 06

IFAB

The Other Match Officials

Other match officials (two assistant referees, fourth official, two additional assistant referees, reserve assistant referee, video assistant referee (VAR) and at least one assistant VAR (AVAR)) may be appointed to matches. They will assist the referee in controlling the match in accordance with the Laws of the Game but the final decision will always be taken by the referee.

The referee, assistant referees, fourth official, additional assistant referees and reserve assistant referee are the 'on-field' match officials.

The VAR and AVAR are the 'video' match officials and assist the referee in accordance with the VAR protocol as determined by The IFAB.

The match officials operate under the direction of the referee. In the event of undue interference or improper conduct, the referee will relieve them of their duties and make a report to the appropriate authorities.

With the exception of the reserve assistant referee, the 'on-field' match officials assist the referee with offences when they have a clearer view than the referee and they must submit a report to the appropriate authorities on any serious misconduct or other incident that occurred out of the view of the referee and the other match officials. They must advise the referee and other match officials of any report being made.

The 'on-field' match officials assist the referee with inspecting the field of play, the balls and players' equipment (including if problems have been resolved) and maintaining records of time, goals, misconduct etc.

Competition rules must state clearly who replaces a match official who is unable to start or continue and any associated changes. In particular, it must be clear whether, if the referee is unable to start or continue, the fourth official or the senior assistant referee or senior additional assistant referee takes over.

1. Assistant referees

They indicate when:

- the whole of the ball leaves the field of play and which team is entitled to a corner kick, goal kick or throw-in
- a player in an offside position may be penalised
- a substitution is requested
- at penalty kicks, the goalkeeper moves off the goal line before the ball is kicked and if the ball crosses the line; if additional assistant referees have been appointed the assistant referee takes a position in line with the penalty mark

The assistant referee's assistance also includes monitoring the substitution procedure.

The assistant referee may enter the field of play to help control the 9.15m (10 yards) distance.

2. Fourth official

The fourth official's assistance also includes:

- supervising the substitution procedure
- checking a player's/substitute's equipment
- the re-entry of a player following a signal/approval from the referee
- supervising the replacement balls
- indicating the minimum amount of additional time the referee intends to play at the end of each half (including extra time)
- informing the referee of irresponsible behaviour by any technical area occupant

3. Additional assistant referees

The additional assistant referees may indicate:

- when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, including when a goal is scored
- which team is entitled to a corner kick or goal kick
- whether, at penalty kicks, the goalkeeper moves off the goal line before the ball is kicked and if the ball crosses the line

4. Reserve assistant referee

The only duty of a reserve assistant referee is to replace an assistant referee or fourth official who is unable to continue.

5. Video match officials

A video assistant referee (VAR) is a match official who may assist the referee to make a decision using replay footage only for a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' relating to a goal/no goal, penalty/no penalty, direct red card (not a second caution) or a case of mistaken identity when the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player of the offending team.

An assistant video assistant referee (AVAR) is a match official who helps the VAR primarily by:

- watching the television footage while the VAR is busy with a 'check' or a 'review'
- keeping a record of VAR-related incidents and any communication or technology problems
- assisting the VAR's communication with the referee, especially communicating with the referee when the VAR is undertaking a 'check'/'review', e.g. to tell the referee to 'stop play' or 'delay the restart' etc.
- recording the time 'lost' when play is delayed for a 'check' or a 'review'
- communicating information about a VAR-related decision to relevant parties

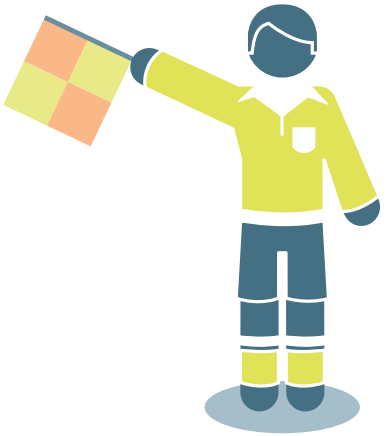
6. Assistant referee signals

Refer to graphics for approved assistant referee signals.

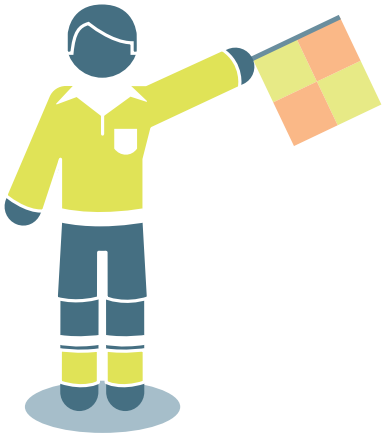
Substitution

Free kick for **attacking team**

Free kick for **defending team**

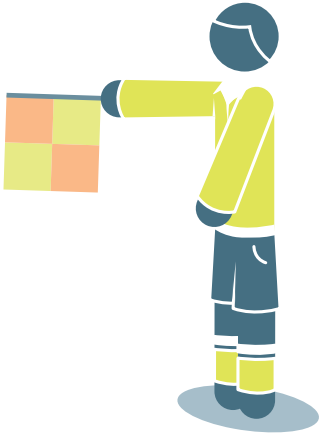


Throw-in for **attacking team**



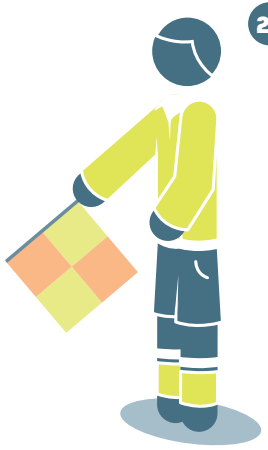
Throw-in for **defending team**

Corner kick

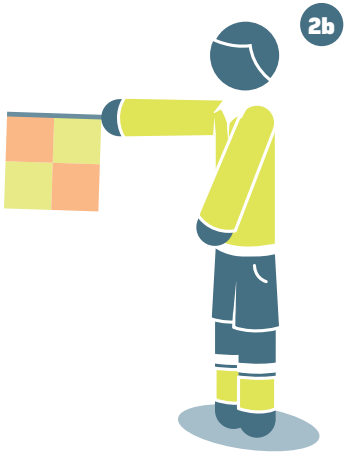


Goal kick

Offside



Offside on the
near side of the field



Offside in the
middle of the field

Offside on the
far side of the field

IFAB

7. Additional assistant referee signals

Goal
(unless the ball has very clearly
passed over the goal line)

IFAB

Law 07

IFAB

The Duration of the Match

1. **Periods of play**
   A match lasts for two equal halves of 45 minutes, which may only be reduced if agreed between the referee and the two teams before the start of the match and if in accordance with competition rules.

2. **Half-time interval**
   Players are entitled to an interval at half-time, not exceeding 15 minutes; a short drinks break (which should not exceed one minute) is permitted at the interval of half-time in extra time. Competition rules must state the duration of the half-time interval and it may be altered only with the referee's permission.

3. **Allowance for time lost**
   Allowance is made by the referee in each half for all time lost in that half through:

   - substitutions
   - assessment and/or removal of injured players
   - wasting time
   - disciplinary sanctions
   - medical stoppages permitted by competition rules, e.g. 'drinks' breaks (which should not exceed one minute) and 'cooling' breaks (ninety seconds to three minutes)
   - delays relating to VAR 'checks' and 'reviews'
   - any other cause, including any significant delay to a restart (e.g. goal celebrations)

The fourth official indicates the minimum additional time decided by the referee at the end of the final minute of each half. The additional time may be increased by the referee but not reduced.

The referee must not compensate for a timekeeping error during the first half by changing the length of the second half.

4. **Penalty kick**
   If a penalty kick has to be taken or retaken, the half is extended until the penalty kick is completed.

5. **Abandoned match**
   An abandoned match is replayed unless the competition rules or organisers determine otherwise.

IFAB

Law 08

The Start and Restart of Play

A kick-off starts both halves of a match, both halves of extra time and restarts play after a goal has been scored. Free kicks (direct or indirect), penalty kicks, throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks are other restarts (see Laws 13–17).
A dropped ball is the restart when the referee stops play and the Law does not require one of the above restarts.

If an offence occurs when the ball is not in play, this does not change how play is restarted.

1. Kick-off

Procedure

- the team that wins the toss of a coin decides which goal to attack in the first half or to take the kick-off
- depending on the above, their opponents take the kick-off or decide which goal to attack in the first half
- the team that decided which goal to attack in the first half takes the kick-off to start the second half
- for the second half, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals
- after a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by their opponents

For every kick-off:

- all players, except the player taking the kick-off, must be in their own half of the field of play
- the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball until it is in play
- the ball must be stationary on the centre mark
- the referee gives a signal
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves

- a goal may be scored directly against the opponents from the kick-off; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents

Offences and sanctions

If the player taking the kick-off touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick, or for a handball offence, a direct free kick, is awarded.

In the event of any other kick-off procedure offence, the kick-off is retaken.

2. Dropped ball

Procedure

- The ball is dropped for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area if, when play was stopped:
  - the ball was in the penalty area or
  - the last touch of the ball was in the penalty area
- In all other cases, the referee drops the ball for one player of the team that last touched the ball at the position where it last touched a player, an outside agent or, as outlined in Law 9.1, a match official
- All other players (of both teams) must remain at least 4 m (4.5 yds) from the ball until it is in play

The ball is in play when it touches the ground.

Offences and sanctions

The ball is dropped again if it:

- touches a player before it touches the ground
- leaves the field of play after it touches the ground, without touching a player

If a dropped ball enters the goal without touching at least two players, play is restarted with:

- a goal kick if it enters the opponents' goal
- a corner kick if it enters the team's goal

IFAB

Law 09

IFAB

The Ball In and Out of Play

1. **Ball out of play**
   The ball is out of play when:
   - it has wholly passed over the goal line or touchline on the ground or in the air
   - play has been stopped by the referee
   - it touches a match official, remains on the field of play and:
     - a team starts a promising attack or
     - the ball goes directly into the goal or
     - the team in possession of the ball changes

   In all these cases, play is restarted with a dropped ball.

2. **Ball in play**
   The ball is in play at all other times when it touches a match official and when it rebounds off a goalpost, crossbar or corner flagpost and remains on the field of play.

IFAB

Law 10

IFAB

Determining the Outcome of a Match

1. **Goal scored**
   A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided that no offence has been committed by the team scoring the goal.

   If the goalkeeper throws the ball directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded.

   If a referee signals a goal before the ball has passed wholly over the goal line, play is restarted with a dropped ball.

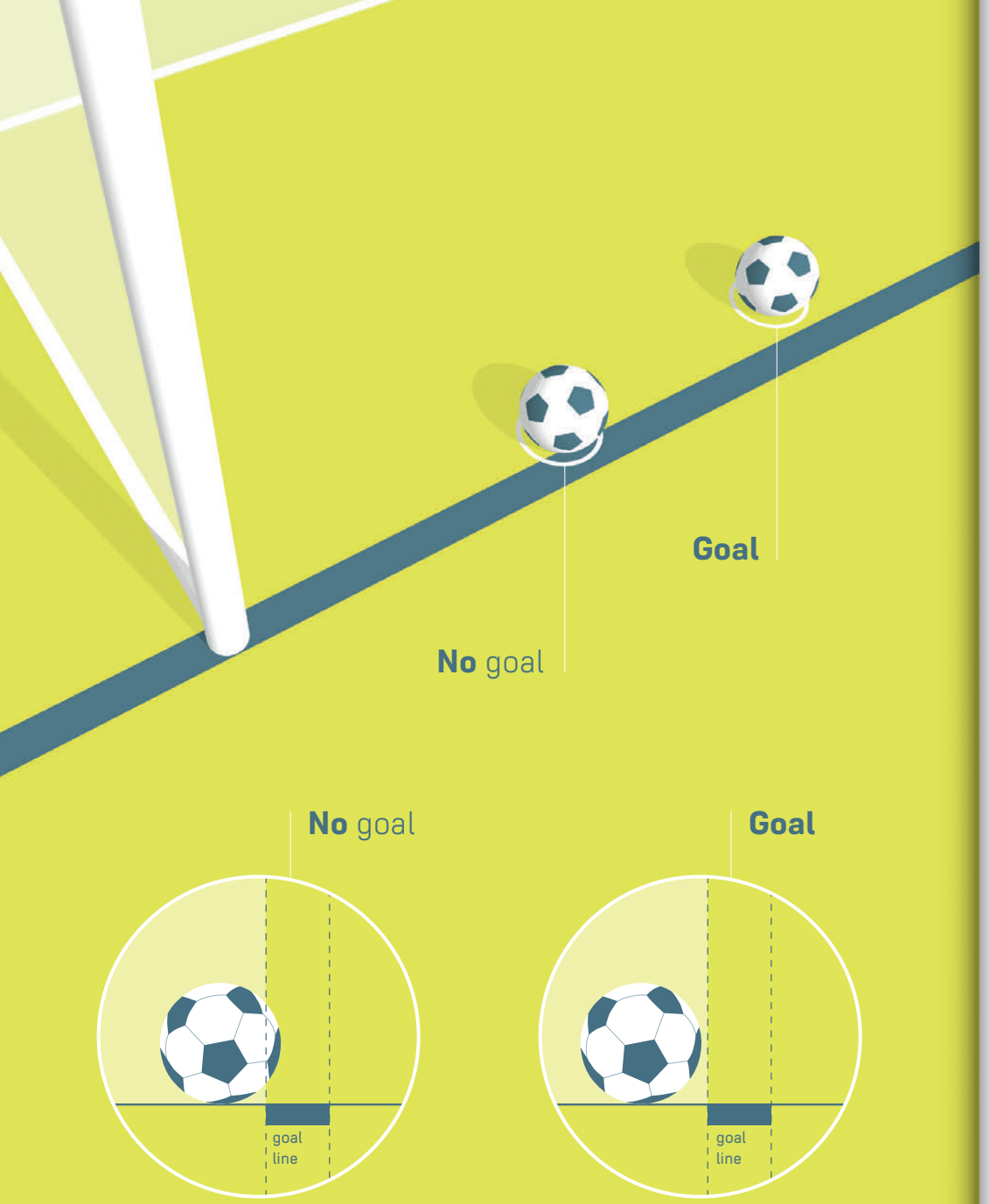
2. **Winning team**
   The team scoring the greater number of goals is the winner. If both teams score no goals or an equal number of goals, the match is drawn.

   When competition rules require a winning team after a drawn match or home-and-away tie, the only permitted procedures to determine the winning team are:

   - away goals rule
   - two equal periods of extra time not exceeding 15 minutes each
   - kicks from the penalty mark

   A combination of the above procedures may be used.

3. **Kicks from the penalty mark**
   Kicks from the penalty mark are taken after the match has ended and unless otherwise stated, the relevant Laws of the Game apply. A player who has been sent off during the match is not permitted to take part; warnings and cautions issued during the match are not carried forward into kicks from the penalty mark.



Procedure

Before kicks from the penalty mark start

- Unless there are other considerations (e.g. ground conditions, safety etc.), the referee tosses a coin to decide the goal at which the kicks will be taken which may only be changed for safety reasons or if the goal or playing surface becomes unusable
- The referee tosses a coin again, and the team that wins the toss decides whether to take the first or second kick
- With the exception of a substitute for a goalkeeper who is unable to continue, only players who are on the field of play or are temporarily off the field of play (injury, adjusting equipment etc.) at the end of the match are eligible to take kicks
- Each team is responsible for selecting from the eligible players the order in which they will take the kicks. The referee is not informed of the order
- If at the end of the match and before or during the kicks one team has a greater number of players than its opponents, it must reduce its numbers to the same number as its opponents and the referee must be informed of the name and number of each player excluded. Any excluded player is not eligible to take part in the kicks (except as outlined below)
- A goalkeeper who is unable to continue before or during the kicks may be replaced by a player excluded to equalise the number of players or, if their team has not used its maximum permitted number of substitutes, a named substitute, but the replaced goalkeeper takes no further part and may not take a kick
- If the goalkeeper has already taken a kick, the replacement may not take a kick until the next round of kicks

During kicks from the penalty mark

- Only eligible players and match officials are permitted to remain on the field of play
- All eligible players, except the player taking the kick and the two goalkeepers, must remain within the centre circle
- The goalkeeper of the kicker must remain on the field of play, outside the penalty area, on the goal line where it meets the penalty area boundary line

- An eligible player may change places with the goalkeeper
- The kick is completed when the ball stops moving, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any offence; the kicker may not play the ball a second time
- The referee keeps a record of the kicks
- If the goalkeeper commits an offence and, as a result, the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper is warned for the first offence and cautioned for any subsequent offence(s)
- If the kicker is penalised for an offence committed after the referee has signalled for the kick to be taken, that kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is cautioned
- If both the goalkeeper and the kicker commit an offence at the same time, the kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is cautioned

Subject to the conditions explained below, both teams take five kicks

- The kicks are taken alternately by the teams
- Each kick is taken by a different player, and all eligible players must take a kick before any player can take a second kick
- If, before both teams have taken five kicks, one has scored more goals than the other could score, even if it were to complete its five kicks, no more kicks are taken
- If, after both teams have taken five kicks, the scores are level, kicks continue until one team has scored a goal more than the other from the same number of kicks
- The above principle continues for any subsequent sequence of kicks but a team may change the order of kickers
- Kicks from the penalty mark must not be delayed for a player who leaves the field of play. The player's kick will be forfeited (not scored) if the player does not return in time to take a kick

Substitutions and sendings-off during kicks from the penalty mark

- A player, substitute or substituted player may be cautioned or sent off
- A goalkeeper who is sent off must be replaced by an eligible player
- A player other than the goalkeeper who is unable to continue may not be replaced
- The referee must not abandon the match if a team is reduced to fewer than seven players

Law

11

Offside

1. Offside position

It is not an offence to be in an offside position.

A player is in an offside position if:

- any part of the head, body or feet is in the opponents' half (excluding the halfway line) and
- any part of the head, body or feet is nearer to the opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second-last opponent

The hands and arms of all players, including the goalkeepers, are not considered.

A player is not in an offside position if level with the:

- second-last opponent or
- last two opponents

2. Offside offence

A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched* by a team-mate is only penalised on becoming involved in active play by:

- interfering with play by playing or touching a ball passed or touched by a team-mate or
- interfering with an opponent by:
  - preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or
  - challenging an opponent for the ball or

**The first point of contact of the 'play' or 'touch' of the ball should be used*

- clearly attempting to play a ball which is close when this action impacts on an opponent or
- making an obvious action which clearly impacts on the ability of an opponent to play the ball

or

- gaining an advantage by playing the ball or interfering with an opponent when it has:
  - rebounded or been deflected off the goalpost, crossbar, match official or an opponent
  - been deliberately saved by any opponent

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who deliberately plays the ball, including by deliberate handball, is not considered to have gained an advantage, unless it was a deliberate save by any opponent.

A 'save' is when a player stops, or attempts to stop, a ball which is going into or very close to the goal with any part of the body except the hands/arms (unless the goalkeeper within the penalty area).

In situations where:

- a player moving from, or standing in, an offside position is in the way of an opponent and interferes with the movement of the opponent towards the ball this is an offside offence if it impacts on the ability of the opponent to play or challenge for the ball; if the player moves into the way of an opponent and impedes the opponent's progress (e.g. blocks the opponent), the offence should be penalised under Law 12
- a player in an offside position is moving towards the ball with the intention of playing the ball and is fouled before playing or attempting to play the ball, or challenging an opponent for the ball, the foul is penalised as it has occurred before the offside offence
- an offence is committed against a player in an offside position who is already playing or attempting to play the ball, or challenging an opponent for the ball, the offside offence is penalised as it has occurred before the foul challenge

3. No offence

There is no offside offence if a player receives the ball directly from:

- a goal kick
- a throw-in
- a corner kick

4. Offences and sanctions

If an offside offence occurs, the referee awards an indirect free kick where the offence occurred, including if it is in the player's own half of the field of play.

A defending player who leaves the field of play without the referee's permission shall be considered to be on the goal line or touchline for the purposes of offside until the next stoppage in play or until the defending team has played the ball towards the halfway line and it is outside its penalty area. If the player left the field of play deliberately, the player must be cautioned when the ball is next out of play.

An attacking player may step or stay off the field of play not to be involved in active play. If the player re-enters from the goal line and becomes involved in play before the next stoppage in play or the defending team has played the ball towards the halfway line and it is outside its penalty area, the player shall be considered to be positioned on the goal line for the purposes of offside. A player who deliberately leaves the field of play and re-enters without the referee's permission and is not penalised for offside and gains an advantage must be cautioned.

If an attacking player remains stationary between the goalposts and inside the goal as the ball enters the goal, a goal must be awarded unless the player commits an offside offence or a Law 12 offence, in which case play is restarted with an indirect or direct free kick.

IFAB

Law

12

IFAB

Fouls and Misconduct

Direct and indirect free kicks and penalty kicks can only be awarded for offences committed when the ball is in play.

1. Direct free kick

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences against an opponent in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- charges
- jumps at
- kicks or attempts to kick
- pushes
- strikes or attempts to strike (including head-butt)
- tackles or challenges
- trips or attempts to trip

If an offence involves contact, it is penalised by a direct free kick.

- Careless is when a player shows a lack of attention or consideration when making a challenge or acts without precaution. No disciplinary sanction is needed
- Reckless is when a player acts with disregard to the danger to, or consequences for, an opponent and must be cautioned
- Using excessive force is when a player exceeds the necessary use of force and/or endangers the safety of an opponent and must be sent off

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences:

- a handball offence (except for the goalkeeper within their penalty area)

- holds an opponent
- impedes an opponent with contact
- bites or spits at someone
- throws an object at the ball, an opponent or a match official, or makes contact with the ball with a held object

See also offences in Law 3.

Handling the ball

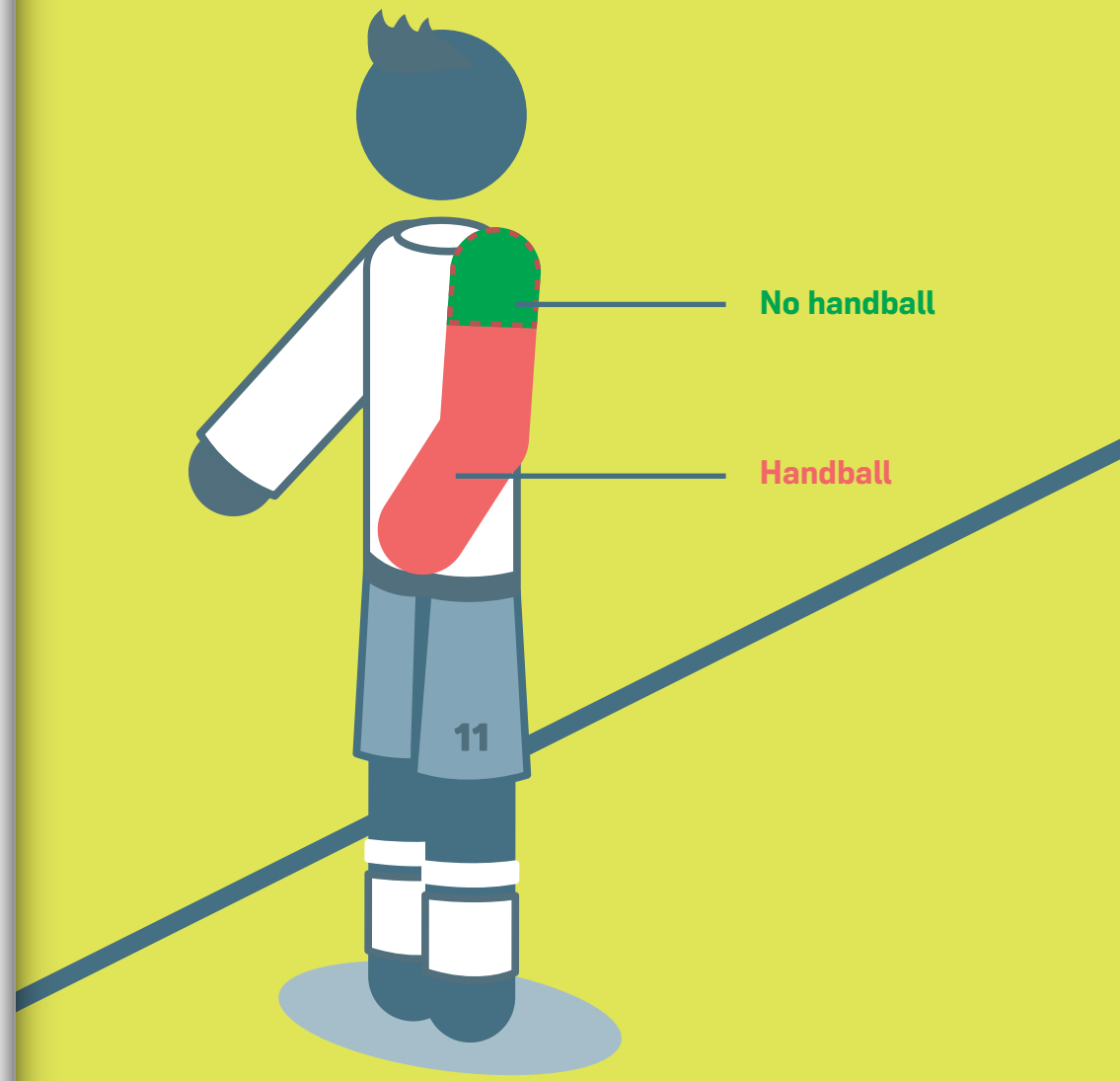
For the purposes of determining handball offences, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit.

It is an offence if a player:

- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, including moving the hand/arm towards the ball
- scores in the opponents' goal directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper
- after the ball has touched their or a team-mate's hand/arm, even if accidental, immediately:
  - scores in the opponents' goal
  - creates a goal-scoring opportunity
- touches the ball with their hand/arm when:
  - the hand/arm has made their body unnaturally bigger
  - the hand/arm is above/beyond their shoulder level (unless the player deliberately plays the ball which then touches their hand/arm)

The above offences apply even if the ball touches a player's hand/arm directly from the head or body (including the foot) of another player who is close.

Except for the above offences, it is not an offence if the ball touches a player's hand/arm:



- directly from the player's own head or body (including the foot)
- directly from the head or body (including the foot) of another player who is close
- if the hand/arm is close to the body and does not make the body unnaturally bigger
- when a player falls and the hand/arm is between the body and the ground to support the body, but not extended laterally or vertically away from the body

The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player outside the penalty area. If the goalkeeper handles the ball inside their penalty area when not permitted to do so, an indirect free kick is awarded but there is no disciplinary sanction. However, if the offence is playing the ball a second time (with or without the hand/arm) after a restart before it touches another player, the goalkeeper must be sanctioned if the offence stops a promising attack or denies an opponent or the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

2. Indirect free kick

An indirect free kick is awarded if a player:

- plays in a dangerous manner
- impedes the progress of an opponent without any contact being made
- is guilty of dissent, using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures or other verbal offences
- prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from the hands or kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing it
- commits any other offence, not mentioned in the Laws, for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player

An indirect free kick is awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their penalty area, commits any of the following offences:

- controls the ball with the hand/arm for more than six seconds before releasing it
- touches the ball with the hand/arm after releasing it and before it has touched another player

- touches the ball with the hand/arm, unless the goalkeeper has clearly kicked or attempted to kick the ball to release it into play, after:
  - it has been deliberately kicked to the goalkeeper by a team-mate
  - receiving it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate

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

- the ball is between the hands or between the hand and any surface (e.g. ground, own body) or by touching it with any part of the hands or arms, except if the ball rebounds from the goalkeeper or the goalkeeper has made a save
- holding the ball in the outstretched open hand
- bouncing it on the ground or throwing it in the air

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

Playing in a dangerous manner

Playing in a dangerous manner is any action that, while trying to play the ball, threatens injury to someone (including the player themself) and includes preventing a nearby opponent from playing the ball for fear of injury.

A scissors or bicycle kick is permissible provided that it is not dangerous to an opponent.

Impeding the progress of an opponent without contact

Impeding the progress of an opponent means moving into the opponent's path to obstruct, block, slow down or force a change of direction when the ball is not within playing distance of either player.

All players have a right to their position on the field of play; being in the way of an opponent is not the same as moving into the way of an opponent.

A player may shield the ball by taking a position between an opponent and the ball if the ball is within playing distance and the opponent is not held off with the arms or body. If the ball is within playing distance, the player may be fairly charged by an opponent.

3. Disciplinary action

The referee has the authority to take disciplinary action from entering the field of play for the pre-match inspection until leaving the field of play after the match ends (including kicks from the penalty mark).

If, before entering the field of play at the start of the match, a player or team official commits a sending-off offence, the referee has the authority to prevent the player or team official taking part in the match (see Law 3.6); the referee will report any other misconduct.

A player or team official who commits a cautionable or sending-off offence, either on or off the field of play, is disciplined according to the offence.

The yellow card communicates a caution and the red card communicates a sending-off.

Only a player, substitute, substituted player or team official may be shown the red or yellow card.

Players, substitutes and substituted players

Delaying the restart of play to show a card

Once the referee has decided to caution or send off a player, play must not be restarted until the sanction has been administered, unless the non-offending team takes a quick free kick, has a clear goal-scoring opportunity and the referee has not started the disciplinary sanction procedure. The sanction is administered at the next stoppage; if the offence was denying the opposing team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the player is cautioned; if the offence interfered with or stopped a promising attack, the player is not cautioned.

Advantage

If the referee plays the advantage for an offence for which a caution/sending-off would have been issued had play been stopped, this caution/sending-off must be issued when the ball is next out of play. However, if the offence was denying the opposing team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour; if the offence was interfering with or stopping a promising attack, the player is not cautioned.

Advantage should not be applied in situations involving serious foul play, violent conduct or a second cautionable offence unless there is a clear opportunity to score a goal. The referee must send off the player when the ball is next out of play, but if the player plays the ball or challenges/interferes with an opponent, the referee will stop play, send off the player and restart with an indirect free kick, unless the player committed a more serious offence.

If a defender starts holding an attacker outside the penalty area and continues holding inside the penalty area, the referee must award a penalty kick.

Cautionable offences

A player is cautioned if guilty of:

- delaying the restart of play
- dissent by word or action
- entering, re-entering or deliberately leaving the field of play without the referee's permission
- failing to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a dropped ball, corner kick, free kick or throw-in
- persistent offences (no specific number or pattern of offences constitutes 'persistent')
- unsporting behaviour
- entering the referee review area (RRA)
- excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal

A substitute or substituted player is cautioned if guilty of:

- delaying the restart of play
- dissent by word or action
- entering or re-entering the field of play without the referee's permission
- unsporting behaviour
- entering the referee review area (RRA)
- excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal

Where two separate cautionable offences are committed (even in close proximity), they should result in two cautions, for example if a player enters the field of play without the required permission and commits a reckless tackle or stops a promising attack with a foul/handball, etc.

Cautions for unsporting behaviour

There are different circumstances when a player must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour, including if a player:

- attempts to deceive the referee, e.g. by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled (simulation)
- changes places with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission (see Law 3)
- commits in a reckless manner a direct free kick offence
- handles the ball to interfere with or stop a promising attack
- commits any other offence which interferes with or stops a promising attack, except where the referee awards a penalty kick for an offence which was an attempt to play the ball
- denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by an offence which was an attempt to play the ball and the referee awards a penalty kick
- handles the ball in an attempt to score a goal (whether or not the attempt is successful) or in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a goal
- makes unauthorised marks on the field of play
- plays the ball when leaving the field of play after being given permission to leave
- shows a lack of respect for the game
- uses a deliberate trick to pass the ball (including from a free kick) to the goalkeeper with the head, chest, knee etc. to circumvent the Law, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball with the hands
- verbally distracts an opponent during play or at a restart

Celebration of a goal

Players can celebrate when a goal is scored, but the celebration must not be excessive; choreographed celebrations are not encouraged and must not cause excessive time-wasting.

Leaving the field of play to celebrate a goal is not a cautionable offence but players should return as soon as possible.

A player must be cautioned, even if the goal is disallowed, for:

- climbing onto a perimeter fence and/or approaching the spectators in a manner which causes safety and/or security issues
- gesturing or acting in a provocative, derisory or inflammatory way
- covering the head or face with a mask or other similar item
- removing the shirt or covering the head with the shirt

Delaying the restart of play

Referees must caution players who delay the restart of play by:

- appearing to take a throw-in but suddenly leaving it to a team-mate to take
- delaying leaving the field of play when being substituted
- excessively delaying a restart
- kicking or carrying the ball away, or provoking a confrontation by deliberately touching the ball after the referee has stopped play
- taking a free kick from the wrong position to force a retake

Sending-off offences

A player, substitute or substituted player who commits any of the following offences is sent off:

- denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by a handball offence (except a goalkeeper within their penalty area)
- denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent whose overall movement is towards the offender's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick (unless as outlined below)
- serious foul play
- biting or spitting at someone
- violent conduct
- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- receiving a second caution in the same match
- entering the video operation room (VOR)

A player, substitute or substituted player who has been sent off must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area.

Denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity

Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by a handball offence, the player is sent off wherever the offence occurs.

Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is cautioned if the offence was an attempt to play the ball; in all other circumstances (e.g. holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball etc.) the offending player must be sent off.

A player, sent-off player, substitute or substituted player who enters the field of play without the required referee's permission and interferes with play or an opponent and denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity is guilty of a sending-off offence.

The following must be considered:

- distance between the offence and the goal
- general direction of the play
- likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball
- location and number of defenders

Serious foul play

A tackle or challenge that endangers the safety of an opponent or uses excessive force or brutality must be sanctioned as serious foul play.

Any player who lunges at an opponent in challenging for the ball from the front, from the side or from behind using one or both legs, with excessive force or endangers the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play.

Violent conduct

Violent conduct is when a player uses or attempts to use excessive force or brutality against an opponent when not challenging for the ball, or against a team-mate, team official, match official, spectator or any other person, regardless of whether contact is made.

In addition, a player who, when not challenging for the ball, deliberately strikes an opponent or any other person on the head or face with the hand or arm, is guilty of violent conduct unless the force used was negligible.

Team officials

Where an offence is committed and the offender cannot be identified, the senior team coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction.

Warning

The following offences should usually result in a warning; repeated or blatant offences should result in a caution or sending-off:

- entering the field of play in a respectful/non-confrontational manner
- failing to cooperate with a match official e.g. ignoring an instruction/request from an assistant referee or the fourth official
- minor/low-level disagreement (by word or action) with a decision
- occasionally leaving the confines of the technical area without committing another offence

Caution

Caution offences include (but are not limited to):

- clearly/persistently not respecting the confines of their team's technical area
- delaying the restart of play by their team
- deliberately entering the technical area of the opposing team (non-confrontational)
- dissent by word or action including:
  - throwing/kicking drinks bottles or other objects
  - gestures which show a clear lack of respect for the match official(s) e.g. sarcastic clapping
- entering the referee review area (RRA)
- excessively/persistently gesturing for a red or yellow card
- excessively showing the "TV signal" for a VAR 'review'
- gesturing or acting in a provocative or inflammatory manner
- persistent unacceptable behaviour (including repeated warning offences)
- showing a lack of respect for the game

Sending-off

Sending-off offences include (but are not limited to):

- delaying the restart of play by the opposing team e.g. holding onto the ball, kicking the ball away, obstructing the movement of a player
- deliberately leaving the technical area to:
  - show dissent towards, or remonstrate with, a match official
  - act in a provocative or inflammatory manner
- entering the opposing technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner
- deliberately throwing/kicking an object onto the field of play
- entering the field of play to:
  - confront a match official (including at half-time and full-time)
  - interfere with play, an opposing player or a match official
- entering the video operation room (VOR)
- physical or aggressive behaviour (including spitting or biting) towards an opposing player, substitute, team official, match official, spectator or any other person (e.g. ball boy/girl, security or competition official etc.)
- receiving a second caution in the same match
- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- using unauthorised electronic or communication equipment and/or behaving in an inappropriate manner as the result of using electronic or communication equipment
- violent conduct

Offences where an object (or the ball) is thrown

In all cases, the referee takes the appropriate disciplinary action:

- reckless – caution the offender for unsporting behaviour
- using excessive force – send off the offender for violent conduct

4. Restart of play after fouls and misconduct

If the ball is out of play, play is restarted according to the previous decision.

If the ball is in play and a player commits a physical offence inside the field of play against:

- an opponent – an indirect or direct free kick or penalty kick
- a team-mate, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, team official or a match official – a direct free kick or penalty kick
- any other person – a dropped ball

All verbal offences are penalised with an indirect free kick.

If, when the ball is in play:

- a player commits an offence against a match official or an opposing player, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, or team official outside the field of play or
- a substitute, substituted or sent-off player, or team official commits an offence against, or interferes with, an opposing player or match official outside the field of play,

play is restarted with a free kick on the boundary line nearest to where the offence/interference occurred; for direct free kick offences, a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender's penalty area.

If an offence is committed outside the field of play by a player against a player, substitute, substituted player or team official of their own team, play is restarted with an indirect free kick on the boundary line closest to where the offence occurred.

If a player makes contact with the ball with an object (boot, shinguard etc.) held in the hand, play is restarted with a direct free kick (or penalty kick).

If a player who is on or off the field of play throws or kicks an object (other than the match ball) at an opposing player, or throws or kicks an object (including a ball) at an opposing substitute, substituted or sent-off player, team official, or a match official or the match ball, play is restarted with a direct free kick from the position where the object struck or would have struck the person or the ball. If this position is off the field of play, the free kick is taken on the nearest point on the boundary line; a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender's penalty area.

If a substitute, substituted or sent-off player, player temporarily off the field of play or team official throws or kicks an object onto the field of play and it interferes with play, an opponent or match official, play is restarted with a direct free kick (or penalty kick) where the object interfered with play or struck or would have struck the opponent, match official or the ball.

IFAB

Law 13

Free Kicks

1. Types of free kick

Direct and indirect free kicks are awarded to the opposing team of a player, substitute, substituted or sent-off player, or team official guilty of an offence.

Indirect free kick signal

The referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising the arm above the head; this signal is maintained until the kick has been taken and the ball touches another player, goes out of play or it is clear that a goal cannot be scored directly.

An indirect free kick must be retaken if the referee fails to signal that the kick is indirect and the ball is kicked directly into the goal.

Ball enters the goal

- if a direct free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal is awarded
- if an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded
- if a direct or indirect free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded

2. Procedure

All free kicks are taken from the place where the offence occurred, except:

- indirect free kicks to the attacking team for an offence inside the opponents' goal area are taken from the nearest point on the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line
- free kicks to the defending team in their goal area may be taken from anywhere in that area

- free kicks for offences involving a player entering, re-entering or leaving the field of play without permission are taken from the position of the ball when play was stopped. However, if a player commits an offence off the field of play, play is restarted with a free kick taken on the boundary line nearest to where the offence occurred; for direct free kick offences, a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender's penalty area
- where the Law designates another position (see Laws 3, 11, 12)

The ball:

- must be stationary and the kicker must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player
- 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
- outside the penalty area for free kicks inside the opponents' penalty area

Where three or more defending team players form a 'wall', all attacking team players must remain at least 1 m (1 yd) from the 'wall' until the ball is in play.

A free kick can be taken by lifting the ball with a foot or both feet simultaneously.

Feinting to take a free kick to confuse opponents is permitted as part of football.

If a player, while correctly taking a free kick, deliberately kicks the ball at an opponent in order to play the ball again but not in a careless or reckless manner or using excessive force, the referee allows play to continue.

3. Offences and sanctions

If, when a free kick is taken, an opponent is closer to the ball than the required distance, the kick is retaken unless the advantage can be applied; but if a player takes a free kick quickly and an opponent who is less than 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball intercepts it, the referee allows play to continue. However, an opponent who deliberately prevents a free kick being taken quickly must be cautioned for delaying the restart of play.

If, when a free kick is taken, an attacking team player is less than 1 m (1 yd) from a 'wall' formed by three or more defending team players, an indirect free kick is awarded.

If, when a free kick is taken by the defending team inside its penalty area, any opponents are inside the penalty area because they did not have time to leave, the referee allows play to continue. If an opponent who is in the penalty area when the free kick is taken, or enters the penalty area before the ball is in play, touches or challenges for the ball before it is in play, the free kick is retaken.

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player an indirect free kick is awarded; if the kicker commits a handball offence:

- a direct free kick is awarded
- a penalty kick is awarded if the offence occurred inside the kicker's penalty area unless the kicker was the goalkeeper in which case an indirect free kick is awarded

IFAB

Law

14

IFAB

The Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if a player commits a direct free kick offence inside their penalty area or off the field as part of play as outlined in Laws 12 and 13.

A goal may be scored directly from a penalty kick.

1. Procedure

The ball must be stationary on the penalty mark and the goalposts, crossbar and goal net must not be moving.

The player taking the penalty kick must be clearly identified.

The defending goalkeeper must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, without touching the goalposts, crossbar or goal net, until the ball has been kicked.

The players other than the kicker and goalkeeper must be:

- at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the penalty mark
- behind the penalty mark
- inside the field of play
- outside the penalty area

After the players have taken positions in accordance with this Law, the referee signals for the penalty kick to be taken.

The player taking the penalty kick must kick the ball forward; backheeling is permitted provided the ball moves forward.

When the ball is kicked, the defending goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot touching, or in line with, the goal line.

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

The kicker must not play the ball again until it has touched another player.

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

Additional time is allowed for a penalty kick to be taken and completed at the end of each half of the match or extra time. When additional time is allowed, the penalty kick is completed when, after the kick has been taken, the ball stops moving, goes out of play, is played by any player (including the kicker) other than the defending goalkeeper, or the referee stops play for an offence by the kicker or the kicker's team. If a defending team player (including the goalkeeper) commits an offence and the penalty is missed/saved, the penalty is retaken.

2. Offences and sanctions

Once the referee has signalled for a penalty kick to be taken, the kick must be taken; if it is not taken the referee may take disciplinary action before signalling again for the kick to be taken.

If, before the ball is in play, one of the following occurs:

- the player taking the penalty kick or a team-mate offends:
  - if the ball enters the goal, the kick is retaken
  - if the ball does not enter the goal, the referee stops play and restarts with an indirect free kick

  except for the following when play will be stopped and restarted with an indirect free kick, regardless of whether or not a goal is scored:

  - a penalty kick is kicked backwards
  - a team-mate of the identified kicker takes the kick; the referee cautions the player who took the kick
  - feinting to kick the ball once the kicker has completed the run-up (feinting in the run-up is permitted); the referee cautions the kicker
- the goalkeeper offends:
  - if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded
  - if the ball misses the goal or rebounds from the crossbar or goalpost(s), the kick is only retaken if the goalkeeper's offence clearly impacted on the kicker
  - if the ball is prevented from entering the goal by the goalkeeper, the kick is retaken

  If the goalkeeper's offence results in the kick being retaken, the goalkeeper is warned for the first offence in the game and cautioned for any subsequent offence(s) in the game
- a team-mate of the goalkeeper offends:
  - if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded
  - if the ball does not enter the goal, the kick is retaken
- a player of both teams offends, the kick is retaken unless a player commits a more serious offence (e.g. 'illegal' feinting)
- both the goalkeeper and the kicker commit an offence at the same time, the kicker is cautioned and play restarts with an indirect free kick to the defending team

If, after the penalty kick has been taken:

- the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player:
  - an indirect free kick (or direct free kick for a handball offence) is awarded
- the ball is touched by an outside agent as it moves forward:
  - the kick is retaken unless the ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent the goalkeeper or a defending player playing the ball, in which case the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the interference was by the attacking team
- the ball rebounds into the field of play from the goalkeeper, the crossbar or the goalposts and is then touched by an outside agent:

- the referee stops play
- play is restarted with a dropped ball at the position where it touched the outside agent

3. Summary table

	Outcome of the penalty kick	
	Goal	**No Goal**
Encroachment by attacking player	Penalty is retaken	Indirect free kick
Encroachment by defending player	Goal	Penalty is retaken
Encroachment by defending and attacking player	Penalty is retaken	Penalty is retaken
Offence by goalkeeper	Goal	Not saved: penalty is not retaken (unless kicker is clearly impacted) Saved: penalty is retaken and warning for goalkeeper; caution for any further offence(s)
Goalkeeper and kicker offend at the same time	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker
Ball kicked backwards	Indirect free kick	Indirect free kick
'Illegal' feinting	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker
Wrong kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for wrong kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for wrong kicker

IFAB

Law

15

IFAB

The Throw-in

A throw-in is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball passes over the touchline, on the ground or in the air.

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in:

- if the ball enters the opponents' goal – a goal kick is awarded
- if the ball enters the thrower's goal – a corner kick is awarded

1. Procedure

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower must:

- stand facing the field of play
- have part of each foot on the touchline or on the ground outside the touchline
- throw the ball with both hands from behind and over the head from the point where it left the field of play

All opponents must stand at least 2 m (2 yds) from the point on the touchline where the throw-in is to be taken.

The ball is in play when it enters the field of play. If the ball touches the ground before entering, the throw-in is retaken by the same team from the same position. If the throw-in is not taken correctly, it is retaken by the opposing team.

If a player, while correctly taking a throw-in, deliberately throws the ball at an opponent in order to play the ball again but not in a careless or a reckless manner or using excessive force, the referee allows play to continue.

The thrower must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.

2. Offences and sanctions

If, after the ball is in play, the thrower touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick is awarded; if the thrower commits a handball offence:

- a direct free kick is awarded
- a penalty kick is awarded if the offence occurred inside the thrower's penalty area unless the ball was handled by the defending team's goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded

An opponent who unfairly distracts or impedes the thrower (including moving closer than 2 m (2 yds) to the place where the throw-in is to be taken) is cautioned for unsporting behaviour, and if the throw-in has been taken, an indirect free kick is awarded.

For any other offence, the throw-in is taken by a player of the opposing team.

IFAB

Law 16

IFAB

The Goal Kick

A goal kick is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, on the ground or in the air, having last touched a player of the attacking team, and a goal is not scored.

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents.

1. Procedure

- The ball must be stationary and is kicked from any point within the goal area by a player of the defending team
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- Opponents must be outside the penalty area until the ball is in play

2. Offences and sanctions

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick is awarded; if the kicker commits a handball offence:

- a direct free kick is awarded
- a penalty kick is awarded if the offence occurred inside the kicker's penalty area, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded

If, when a goal kick is taken, any opponents are inside the penalty area because they did not have time to leave, the referee allows play to continue. If an opponent who is in the penalty area when the goal kick is taken, or enters the penalty area before the ball is in play, touches or challenges for the ball before it is in play, the goal kick is retaken.

If a player enters the penalty area before the ball is in play and fouls or is fouled by an opponent, the goal kick is retaken and the offender may be cautioned or sent off, depending on the offence.

For any other offence, the kick is retaken.

IFAB

Law 17

IFAB

The Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, on the ground or in the air, having last touched a player of the defending team, and a goal is not scored.

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents.

1. Procedure

- The ball must be placed in the corner area nearest to the point where the ball passed over the goal line
- The ball must be stationary and is kicked by a player of the attacking team
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not need to leave the corner area
- The corner flagpost must not be moved
- Opponents must remain at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the corner arc until the ball is in play

2. Offences and sanctions

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick is awarded; if the kicker commits a handball offence:

- a direct free kick is awarded
- a penalty kick is awarded if the offence occurred inside the kicker's penalty area, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded

If a player, while correctly taking a corner kick, deliberately kicks the ball at an opponent in order to play the ball again but not in a careless or reckless manner or using excessive force, the referee allows play to continue.

For any other offence, the kick is retaken.

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol

Protocol – principles, practicalities and procedures

The VAR protocol, as far as possible, conforms to the principles and philosophy of the Laws of the Game.

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all the VAR protocol and implementation requirements (as set out in the VAR Handbook) and has received written permission from The IFAB and FIFA.

1. Principles

The use of VARs in football matches is based on a number of principles, all of which must apply in every match using VARs.

1. A video assistant referee (VAR) is a match official, with independent access to match footage, who may assist the referee only in the event of a '**clear and obvious error**' or '**serious missed incident**' in relation to:
   a. **Goal/no goal**
   b. **Penalty/no penalty**
   c. **Direct red card** (not second yellow card/caution)
   d. **Mistaken identity** (when the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player of the offending team)
2. The referee must always make a decision, i.e. the referee is not permitted to give 'no decision' and then use the VAR to make the decision; a decision to allow play to continue after an alleged offence can be reviewed.
3. The original decision given by the referee will not be changed unless the video review clearly shows that the decision was a 'clear and obvious error'.

4. Only the referee can initiate a 'review'; the VAR (and other match officials) can only recommend a 'review' to the referee.
5. The final decision is always taken by the referee, either based on information from the VAR or after the referee has undertaken an 'on-field review' (OFR).
6. There is no time limit for the review process as accuracy is more important than speed.
7. The players and team officials must not surround the referee or attempt to influence if a decision is reviewed, the review process or the final decision.
8. The referee must remain 'visible' during the review process to ensure transparency.
9. If play continues after an incident which is then reviewed, any disciplinary action taken/required during the post-incident period is not cancelled, even if the original decision is changed (except a caution/sending-off for stopping or interfering with a promising attack or DOGSO).
10. If play has stopped and been restarted, the referee may not undertake a 'review' except for a case of mistaken identity or for a potential sending-off offence relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive gesture(s).
11. The period of play before and after an incident that can be reviewed is determined by the Laws of the Game and VAR protocol.
12. As the VAR will automatically 'check' every situation/decision, there is no need for coaches or players to request a 'review'.

2. Reviewable match-changing decisions/incidents

The referee may receive assistance from the VAR only in relation to four categories of match-changing decisions/incidents. In all these situations, the VAR is only used *after the referee has made a (first/original) decision* (including allowing play to continue), or if a serious incident is missed/not seen by the match officials.

The referee's original decision will not be changed unless there was a 'clear and obvious error' (this includes any decision made by the referee based on information from another match official e.g. offside).

The categories of decision/incident which may be reviewed in the event of a potential 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' are:

a. Goal/no goal

- attacking team offence in the build-up to or scoring of the goal (handball, foul, offside etc.)
- ball out of play prior to the goal
- goal/no goal decisions
- offence by goalkeeper and/or kicker at the taking of a penalty kick or encroachment by an attacker or defender who becomes directly involved in play if the penalty kick rebounds from the goalpost, crossbar or goalkeeper

b. Penalty kick/no penalty kick

- attacking team offence in the build-up to the penalty incident (handball, foul, offside etc.)
- ball out of play prior to the incident
- location of offence (inside or outside the penalty area)
- penalty kick incorrectly awarded
- penalty kick offence not penalised

c. Direct red cards (not second yellow card/caution)

- DOGSO (especially position of offence and positions of other players)
- serious foul play (or reckless challenge)
- violent conduct, biting or spitting at another person
- using offensive, insulting or abusive gestures

d. Mistaken identity (red or yellow card)

If the referee penalises an offence and then gives the wrong player from the offending (penalised) team a yellow or red card, the identity of the offender can be reviewed; the actual offence itself cannot be reviewed unless it relates to a goal, penalty incident or direct red card.

3. Practicalities

Use of VARs during a match involves the following practical arrangements:

- The VAR watches the match in the video operation room (VOR) assisted by an assistant VAR (AVAR) and replay operator (RO)
- Depending on the number of camera angles (and other considerations) there may be more than one AVAR or RO
- Only authorised persons are allowed to enter the VOR or communicate with the VAR/AVAR/RO during the match
- The VAR has independent access to, and replay control of, TV broadcast footage
- The VAR is connected to the communication system being used by the match officials and can hear everything they say; the VAR can only speak to the referee by pushing a button (to avoid the referee being distracted by conversations in the VOR)
- If the VAR is busy with a 'check' or a 'review', the AVAR may speak to the referee, especially if the game needs to be stopped or to ensure play does not restart
- If the referee decides to view the replay footage, the VAR will select the best angle/replay speed; the referee can request other/additional angles/speeds

4. Procedures

Original decision

- The referee and other match officials must always make an initial decision (including any disciplinary action) as if there was no VAR (except for a 'missed' incident)
- The referee and other match officials are not permitted to give 'no decision' as this will lead to 'weak/indecisive' officiating, too many 'reviews' and significant problems if there is a technology failure
- The referee is the only person who can make the final decision; the VAR has the same status as the other match officials and can only assist the referee

- Delaying the flag/whistle for an offence is only permissible in *a very clear attacking situation* when a player is about to score a goal or has a clear run into/towards the opponents' penalty area
- If an assistant referee delays a flag for an offence, the assistant referee must raise the flag if the attacking team scores a goal, is awarded a penalty kick, free kick, corner kick or throw-in, or retains possession of the ball after the initial attack has ended; in all other situations, the assistant referee should decide whether or not to raise the flag, depending on the requirements of the game

Check

- The VAR automatically 'checks' the TV camera footage for every potential or actual goal, penalty or direct red card decision/incident, or a case of mistaken identity, using different camera angles and replay speeds
- The VAR can 'check' the footage in normal speed and/or in slow motion but, in general, slow-motion replays should only be used for facts, e.g. position of offence/player, point of contact for physical offences and handball, ball out of play (including goal/no goal); normal speed should be used for the 'intensity' of an offence or to decide if it was a handball offence
- If the 'check' does not indicate a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident', there is usually no need for the VAR to communicate with the referee – this is a 'silent check'; however, it sometimes helps the referee/assistant referee to manage the players/match if the VAR confirms that no 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' occurred
- If the restart of play needs to be delayed for a 'check', the referee will signal this by clearly holding a finger to the earpiece/headset and extending the other hand/arm; this signal must be maintained until the 'check' is complete as it announces that the referee is receiving information (which may be from the VAR or another match official)
- If the 'check' indicates a probable 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident', the VAR will communicate this information to the referee, who will then decide whether or not to initiate a 'review'

Review

- The referee can initiate a 'review' for a potential 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' when:
  - the VAR (or another match official) recommends a 'review'
  - the referee suspects that something serious has been 'missed'
- If play has already stopped, the referee delays the restart
- If play has not already stopped, the referee stops play when the ball is next in a neutral zone/situation (usually when neither team is in an attacking move) and shows the 'TV signal'
- The VAR describes to the referee what can be seen on the TV replay(s) and the referee then:
  - shows the 'TV signal' (if not already shown) and goes to the referee review area to view replay footage – 'on-field review' (OFR) – before making a final decision. The other match officials will not review the footage unless, in exceptional circumstances, asked to do so by the referee
    or
  - makes a final decision based on the referee's own perception and the information from the VAR, and, where appropriate, input from other match officials – VAR-only review
- At the end of both review processes, the referee must show the 'TV signal' immediately followed by the final decision
- For subjective decisions, e.g. intensity of a foul challenge, interference at offside, handball considerations, an 'on-field review' (OFR) is appropriate
- For factual decisions, e.g. position of an offence or player (offside), point of contact (handball/foul), location (inside or outside the penalty area), ball out of play etc. a VAR-only review is usually appropriate but an 'on-field review' (OFR) can be used for a factual decision if it will help manage the players/match or 'sell' the decision (e.g. a crucial match-deciding decision late in the game)
- The referee can request different cameras angles/replay speeds but, in general, slow-motion replays should only be used for facts, e.g. position of offence/player, point of contact for physical offences and handball, ball out of play (including goal/no goal); normal speed should be used for the 'intensity' of an offence or to decide if it was a handball offence
- For decisions/incidents relating to goals, penalty/no penalty and red cards for denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO), it may be necessary to review the attacking phase of play which led directly to the decision/incident; this may include how the attacking team gained possession of the ball in open play
- The Laws of the Game do not allow restart decisions (corner kicks, throw-ins etc.) to be changed once play has restarted, so they cannot be reviewed
- If play has stopped and restarted, the referee may only undertake a 'review', and take the appropriate disciplinary sanction, for a case of mistaken identity or for a potential sending-off offence relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive gesture(s)
- The review process should be completed as efficiently as possible, but the accuracy of the final decision is more important than speed. For this reason, and because some situations are complex with several reviewable decisions/incidents, there is no maximum time limit for the review process

Final decision

- When the review process is completed, the referee must show the 'TV signal' and communicate the final decision
- The referee will then take/change/rescind any disciplinary action (where appropriate) and restart play in accordance with the Laws of the Game

Players, substitutes and team officials

- As the VAR will automatically 'check' every situation/incident, there is no need for coaches or players to request a '**check**' or '**review**'
- Players, substitutes and team officials must not attempt to influence or interfere with the review process, including when the final decision is communicated
- During the review process, players should remain on the field of play; substitutes and team officials should remain off the field of play

- A player/substitute/substituted player/team official who excessively shows the "TV signal" or enters the RRA will be cautioned
- A player/substitute/substituted player/team official who enters the VOR will be sent off

Match validity

In principle, a match is not invalidated because of:

- malfunction(s) of the VAR technology (as for goal line technology (GLT))
- wrong decision(s) involving the VAR (as the VAR is a match official)
- decision(s) not to review an incident
- review(s) of a non-reviewable situation/decision

IFAB

Law changes 2020/21

IFAB

Outline summary of Law changes

Herewith a simple outline of the main changes/clarifications.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

- The goalposts and crossbar may be a combination of the four basic shapes

Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match

- Yellow cards (YCs) and warnings are not carried forward into kicks from the penalty mark (KFPM)
- *See also changes to Law 14 relating to KFPM*

Law 11 – Offside

- Deliberate handball by a defending player is considered 'deliberate play' for offside

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

- Handball:
  - the boundary between the shoulder and the arm is defined as the bottom of the armpit (see the diagram on p105)
  - 'accidental' handball by an attacking player (or team-mate) is only penalised if it occurs 'immediately' before a goal or clear goal-scoring opportunity
- A goalkeeper can receive a YC or be sent off (RC) for 'illegally' touching the ball a second time after a restart (e.g. goal kick, free kick etc.) even if the touch is with the hand/arm
- Any offence (not only a foul) which 'interferes with or stops a promising attack' should result in a YC
- A player who fails to respect the 4m (4.5 yd) required distance at a dropped ball should receive a YC
- If the referee plays advantage or allows a 'quick' free kick for an offence which 'interfered with or stopped a promising attack', the YC is not issued

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

- An offence by the goalkeeper is not penalised if a penalty kick misses the goal or rebounds from the goal (without a touch from the goalkeeper) unless the offence clearly affected the kicker
- The goalkeeper is warned for the first offence; it is a YC for any further offence(s)
- The kicker is penalised if the goalkeeper and the kicker offend at exactly the same time

VAR protocol

- Only one 'TV signal' is required for a VAR-only review

Glossary

- A definition of the offence of holding has been included
- A player's position at a restart is the position of the feet or any part of the body which is touching the ground (except as outlined in Law 11 – Offside)

Clarification

If at a goal kick or free kick the goalkeeper 'flicks' the ball up and a team-mate heads/chests the ball back for the goalkeeper to catch, the kick is retaken; there is no disciplinary sanction (unless this occurs persistently)

Editorial changes

A few editorial changes have been made to make the order of text more consistent/logical; they are underlined in the Laws:

Reorganised text

Law 12

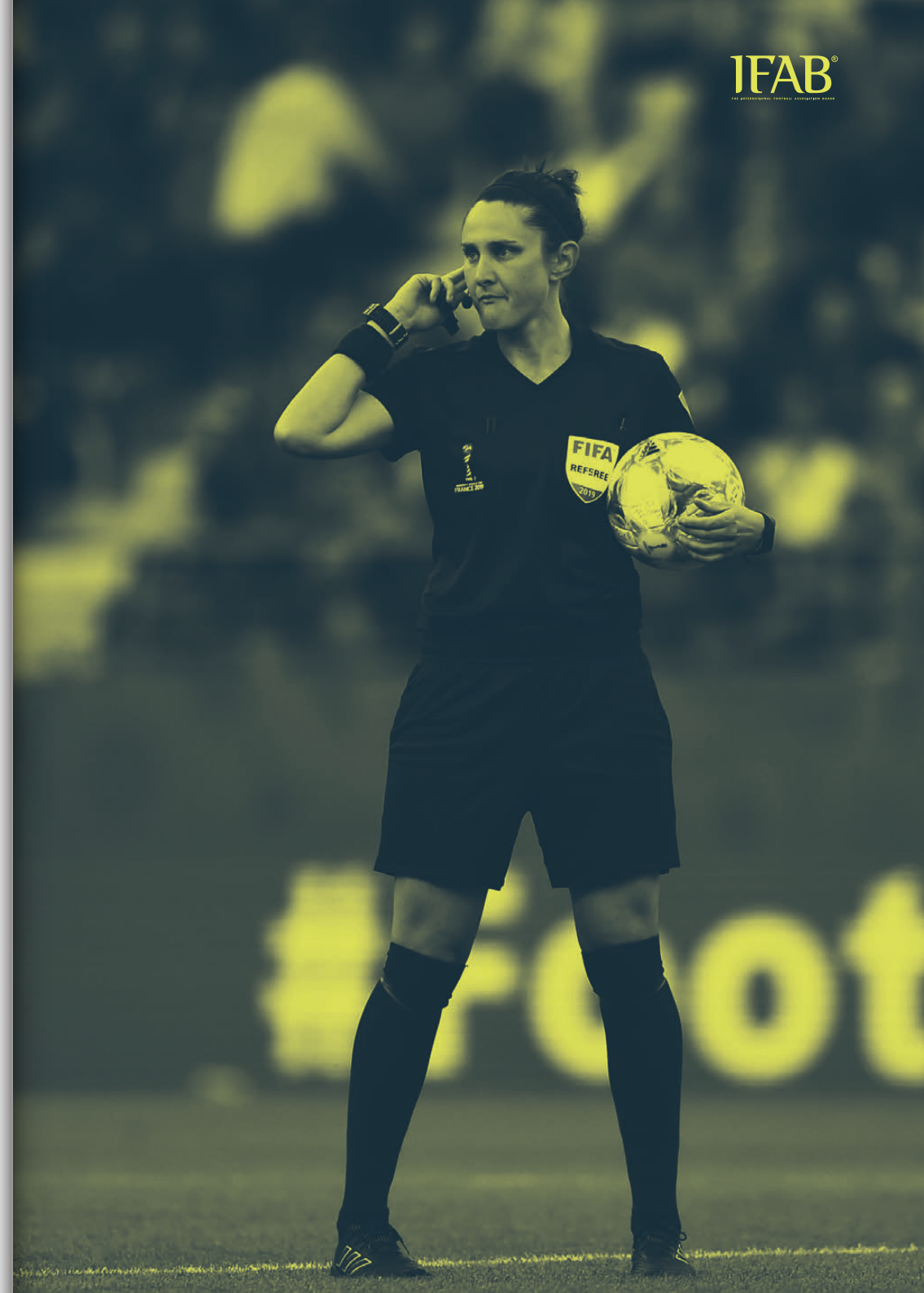
- The order of the bullet points defining handball offences has been rearranged

Law 14

- Additional bullet points relating to goalkeeper offences have been included
- The summary table of offences at a penalty kick has been updated and reorganised

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) protocol

- The text in the 'Review' section has been rearranged to emphasise the expectation that most VAR reviews will be 'on-field reviews' (OFRs)



Details of all Law changes (in Law order)

The following are the changes to the Laws of the Game for the 2020/21 edition. For each change, the new/amended/additional wording is given, together with the old wording, where appropriate – followed by an explanation of the change.

Law 01 – The Field of Play

10. Goals

Amended text

(…)
The goalposts and crossbar must be made of approved material. They must be square, rectangular, round, ~~or~~ elliptical or a combination of these ~~in~~ shapes and must not be dangerous.

Explanation

The goalposts and crossbar may be a combination of the four basic shapes.

Law 02 – The Ball

2. Replacement of a defective ball

Amended text

If the ball becomes defective:
- play is stopped and
- restarted ~~by dropping the replacement~~ with a dropped ball ~~where the original ball became defective~~

Explanation

Wording changed to be consistent with Law 8.

Law 04 – The Players' Equipment

4. Other equipment
Electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS)

Amended text

Electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS)
Where wearable technology (WT) as part of electronic performance and tracking systems (EPTS) is used in matches played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA, confederations or national football associations, the competition organiser must ensure that the technology attached to the ~~player's~~ players' equipment is not dangerous and ~~must bear the following mark~~ meets one of the following standards: IMS (International Match Standard) or FIFA Quality.

This diagram to be deleted:

~~This mark indicates that it has been officially tested and meets the minimum safety requirements of the International Match Standard developed by FIFA and approved by The IFAB.~~ The institutes conducting these tests are subject to the approval of FIFA.
Where ~~electronic performance and tracking systems (~~EPTS~~)~~ are ~~used (subject to the agreement of the national football association/competition organiser)~~ provided by the match or competition organiser, it is the responsibility of that match or ~~the~~ competition organiser ~~must~~ to ensure that the information and data transmitted from EPTS to the technical area during matches played in an official competition are reliable and accurate.
(…)
The following mark indicates that an EPTS (wearable or optical) ~~device/system~~ has been officially tested ~~and meets~~ to the requirements in terms of reliability and accuracy of positional data in football:

Explanation

Wording reflects updates to the FIFA performance standards for EPTS devices.

Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of a Match

3. Kicks from the penalty mark

Amended text

Kicks from the penalty mark are taken after the match has ended and unless otherwise stated, the relevant Laws of the Game apply. A player who has been sent off during the match is not permitted to take part; warnings and cautions issued during the match are not carried forward into kicks from the penalty mark.

Explanation

Cautions (YCs) and warnings issued during the match (including during extra time) are not carried forward because kicks from the penalty mark (KFPM) are not part of the match. A player who receives a YC during both the match and the KFPM is not sent off (during the KFPM or for disciplinary purposes).

3. Kicks from the penalty mark

Amended text

During kicks from the penalty mark

(…)

- If the goalkeeper commits an offence and, as a result, the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper ~~must be cautioned~~ is warned for the first offence and cautioned for any subsequent offence(s)

(…)

- If both the goalkeeper and the kicker commit an offence at the same time~~:~~,
  - ~~If the kick is missed or saved, the kick is retaken and both players cautioned~~
  - ~~If the kick is scored, the goal is disallowed,~~ the kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is cautioned

Explanation

- Most goalkeeper encroachment results from mis-anticipating when the ball will be kicked, so the goalkeeper should be warned for a first offence but must be cautioned for any further offence(s) at the retaken kick and/or any subsequent kick.
- When (rarely) the goalkeeper and the kicker offend at **exactly the same time**, the kicker should be penalised, as it is the 'illegal' feinting that causes the goalkeeper's encroachment.

Law 11 – Offside

2. Offside offence

Amended text

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who deliberately plays the ball ~~(except from a deliberate save by any opponent)~~, including by deliberate handball, is not considered to have gained an advantage, unless it was a deliberate save by any opponent.

Explanation

Clarification that deliberate handball by a defender is considered 'deliberate play' for offside. As 'legal' deliberate play (e.g. a kick or header) causes a player in an offside position to no longer be offside, 'illegal' play should have the same outcome.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

1. Direct free kick
Handling the ball

New text and diagram

For the purposes of determining handball offences, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit.

Explanation

For the purposes of handball, the arm starts at the bottom/end of the armpit, as shown in the diagram in Law 12.

1. Direct free kick
Handling the ball

Amended text

It is an offence if a player:

- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, including moving the hand/arm towards the ball
- scores in the opponents' goal directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper
- ~~gains possession/control of~~ after the ball ~~after it~~ has touched their or a team-mate's hand/arm, even if accidental, ~~and then the player~~ immediately:
  - scores in the opponents' goal
  - creates a goal-scoring opportunity

~~It is usually an offence if a player:~~

- touches the ball with their hand/arm when:
- (…)

Except for the above offences, it is not ~~usually~~ an offence if the ball touches a player's hand/arm:

(…)

Explanation

Clarification that:

- if an attacking player accidentally touches the ball with their hand/arm and the ball then goes to another attacking player and the attacking team immediately scores, this is a handball offence;
- it is not an offence if, after an accidental handball, the ball travels some distance (pass or dribble) and/or there are several passes before the goal or goal-scoring opportunity.

1. Direct free kick
Handling the ball

Amended text

The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player outside the penalty area. If the goalkeeper handles the ball inside their penalty area when not permitted to do so, an indirect free kick is awarded but there is no disciplinary sanction. However, if the offence is playing the ball a second time (with or without the hand/arm) after a restart before it touches another player, the goalkeeper must be sanctioned if the offence stops a promising attack or denies an opponent or the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

Explanation

If a goalkeeper deliberately plays the ball a second time at a restart (before it has touched another player) and stops a promising attack or denies a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the goalkeeper should be cautioned (YC) or sent off (RC). This applies even if the second touch was with the hand/arm, as the offence is not 'handball' but 'illegally' playing the ball a second time.

3. Disciplinary action
Delaying the restart of play to show a card

Amended text

Once the referee has decided to caution or send off a player, play must not be restarted until the sanction has been administered, unless the non-offending team takes a quick free kick, has a clear goal-scoring opportunity and the referee has not started the disciplinary sanction procedure. The sanction is administered at the next stoppage; if the offence was denying the opposing team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the player is cautioned; if the offence interfered with or stopped a promising attack, the player is not cautioned.

Explanation

If the referee allows a 'quick' free kick after a DOGSO offence, the (delayed) RC becomes a YC, so to be consistent, if the referee allows a 'quick' free kick after an offence which interfered with or stopped a promising attack, the (delayed) YC should not be issued.

3. Disciplinary action
Advantage

Amended text

If the referee plays the advantage for an offence for which a caution/sending-off would have been issued had play been stopped, this caution/sending-off must be issued when the ball is next out of play. However, if the offence was denying the opposing team ~~except for the denial of~~ an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, ~~when~~ the player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour; if the offence was interfering with or stopping a promising attack, the player is not cautioned.

Explanation

If the referee plays advantage for a DOGSO offence, the RC becomes a YC, so to be consistent, if the referee plays advantage for an offence which interfered with or stopped a promising attack, the YC should not be issued.

3. Disciplinary action
Cautionable offences

Amended text

A player is cautioned if guilty of:
(…)
- failing to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a dropped ball, corner kick, free kick or throw-in

Explanation

Inclusion of dropped ball in cautionable offences for 'failing to respect the required distance'.

3. Disciplinary action
Cautions for unsporting behaviour

Amended text

There are different circumstances when a player must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour, including if a player:
(…)
- commits ~~a foul~~ any other offence which interferes with or stops a promising attack, except where the referee awards a penalty kick for an offence which was an attempt to play the ball

Explanation

A promising attack can be stopped or interfered with by an offence which is not a foul challenge (e.g. 'illegally' playing the ball a second time after a restart), so the wording now includes all such offences other than handball, which is covered in the previous bullet point.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

2. Offences and sanctions

Amended text

(…)

If, before the ball is in play, one of the following occurs:

(…)

- the goalkeeper offends:
  - if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded
  - if the ball misses the goal or rebounds from the crossbar or goalpost(s), the kick is only retaken if the goalkeeper's offence clearly impacted on the kicker
  - if the ball is prevented from entering the goal by the goalkeeper, the kick is retaken

  If the goalkeeper's offence results in the kick being retaken, the goalkeeper is warned for the first offence in the game and cautioned for any subsequent offence(s) in the game
- ~~the goalkeeper or~~ a team-mate of the goalkeeper offends:
  - if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded
  - if the ball does not enter the goal, the kick is retaken~~; the goalkeeper is cautioned if responsible for the offence~~
- a player of both teams offends ~~the Laws of the Game~~, the kick is retaken unless a player commits a more serious offence (e.g. 'illegal' feinting)
- ~~if~~ both the goalkeeper and the kicker commit an offence at the same time~~:~~,
  - ~~if the kick is missed or saved, the kick is retaken and both players cautioned~~
  - ~~if the kick is scored, the goal is disallowed,~~ the kicker is cautioned and play restarts with an indirect free kick to the defending team

Explanation

- Confirmation (as outlined in IFAB Circular no. 17 – August 2019) that if the goalkeeper offends at the taking of a penalty kick and the ball misses the goal or rebounds from the goalposts or crossbar (i.e. the goalkeeper does not 'save' the kick), the goalkeeper is not penalised unless the goalkeeper's action(s) had a clear impact on the kicker.

- Most goalkeeper encroachment results from mis-anticipating when the ball will be kicked, so the goalkeeper should not be cautioned for a first offence but must be cautioned for any further offence(s) at that kick and/or any subsequent kick.
- If the kicker and goalkeeper offend at exactly the same time (a rare event), the goalkeeper's offence is usually caused by the kicker's 'illegal' feinting, so the kicker is penalised.

3. Summary table

Amended table

	Outcome of the penalty kick	
	Goal	**No Goal**
Encroachment by attacking player	Penalty is retaken	Indirect free kick
Encroachment by defending player	Goal	Penalty is retaken
Encroachment by defending and attacking player	Penalty is retaken	Penalty is retaken
Offence by goalkeeper	Goal	Not saved: penalty is not retaken (unless kicker is clearly impacted) Saved: penalty is retaken and warning for goalkeeper; caution for any further offence(s)
Goalkeeper and kicker offend at the same time	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker
Ball kicked backwards	Indirect free kick	Indirect free kick
'Illegal' feinting	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for kicker
Wrong kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for wrong kicker	Indirect free kick and caution for wrong kicker

VAR protocol and handbook updates

4. Procedures
Check

Amended text

(…)

- If the 'check' indicates a probable 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident', the VAR will communicate this information ~~(but not the decision to be taken)~~ to the referee, who will then decide whether or not to initiate a 'review'.

Explanation

Reference to the final decision is removed, as the VAR is permitted to give advice to the referee about the decision but the referee always makes the final decision.

4. Procedures
Review

Amended text

(…)

- If play has not already stopped, the referee stops play when the ball is next in a neutral zone/situation (usually when neither team is in an attacking move) and shows the 'TV signal'
- ~~In both situations, the referee must indicate that a 'review' will take place by clearly showing the 'TV signal' (outline of a TV screen)~~
- The VAR describes to the referee what can be seen on the TV replay(s) ~~but not the decision to be taken,~~ and the referee then:
  - shows the 'TV signal' (if not already shown) and goes to the referee review area to view replay footage – 'on-field review' (OFR) – before making a final decision. The other match officials will not review the footage unless, in exceptional circumstances, asked to do so by the referee

    or
  - makes a final decision based on the referee's own perception and the information from the VAR, and, where appropriate, input from other match officials – VAR-only review

- At the end of both review processes, the referee must show the 'TV signal' ~~again~~, immediately followed by the final decision
- For subjective decisions, e.g. intensity of a foul challenge, interference at offside, handball considerations, an 'on-field review' (OFR) is ~~often~~ appropriate
- For factual decisions, e.g. position of an offence or player (offside), point of contact (handball/foul), location (inside or outside the penalty area), ball out of play etc. a VAR-only review is usually appropriate but an 'on-field review' (OFR) can be used for a factual decision if it will help manage the players/match or 'sell' the decision (e.g. a crucial match-deciding decision late in the game)

Explanation

- Only one 'TV signal' is needed for a 'VAR-only review' (unless a signal is also required after stopping play).
- Reorganising the text emphasises that 'on-field reviews' (OFRs) are expected when the incident/decision is non-factual.

Glossary

Holding offence

A holding offence occurs only when a player's contact with an opponent's body or equipment impedes the opponent's movement

Restart position

A player's position at a restart is determined by the position of their feet or any part of their body which is touching the ground, except as outlined in Law 11 – Offside

Glossary

The Glossary contains words/phrases which need clarification or explanation beyond the detail in the Laws and/or which are not always easily translated into other languages.

Football bodies

The IFAB – The International Football Association Board
Body composed of the four British FAs and FIFA which is responsible for the Laws of the Game worldwide. In principle, changes to the Laws may only be approved at the Annual General Meeting usually held in February or March

FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association
The governing body responsible for football throughout the world

Confederation
Body responsible for football in a continent. The six confederations are AFC (Asia), CAF (Africa), Concacaf (North, Central America and Caribbean), CONMEBOL (South America), OFC (Oceania) and UEFA (Europe)

National football association
Body responsible for football in a country

Football terms

A

Abandon
To end/terminate a match before the scheduled finish

Additional time
Time allowed at the end of each half for time 'lost' because of substitutions, injuries, disciplinary action, goal celebrations etc.

Advantage
The referee allows play to continue when an offence has occurred if this benefits the non-offending team

Assessment of injured player
Quick examination of an injury, usually by a medical person, to see if the player requires treatment

Away goals rule
Method of deciding a match/tie when both teams have scored the same number of goals; goals scored away from home count double

B

Brutality
An act which is savage, ruthless or deliberately violent

C

Caution
Disciplinary sanction which results in a report to a disciplinary authority; indicated by showing a yellow card; two cautions in a match result in a player or team official being sent off

Challenge
An action when a player competes/contests with an opponent for the ball

Charge (an opponent)
Physical challenge against an opponent, usually using the shoulder and upper arm (which is kept close to the body)

'Cooling' break
In the interests of player welfare and safety, competition rules may allow, in certain weather conditions (high humidity and temperatures), 'cooling' breaks (usually ninety seconds to three minutes) to allow the body's temperature to fall; these are different from 'drinks' breaks

D

Deceive
Act to mislead/trick the referee into giving an incorrect decision/disciplinary sanction which benefits the deceiver and/or their team

Deliberate
An action which the player intended/meant to make; it is not a 'reflex' or unintended reaction

Direct free kick
A free kick from which a goal can be scored by kicking the ball directly into the opponents' goal without having to touch another player

Discretion
Judgment used by a referee or other match official when making a decision

Dissent
Public protest or disagreement (verbal and/or physical) with a match official's decision; punishable by a caution (yellow card)

Distract
Disturb, confuse or draw attention (usually unfairly)

'Drinks' break
Competition rules may allow 'drinks' breaks (of no more than one minute) for players to rehydrate; these are different from 'cooling' breaks

Dropped ball
A method of restarting play – the referee drops the ball for one player of the team that last touched the ball (except in the penalty area where the ball is dropped for the goalkeeper); the ball is in play when it touches the ground

E

Electronic performance and tracking system (EPTS)
System which records and analyses data about the physical and physiological performance of a player

Endanger the safety of an opponent
Put an opponent at danger or risk (of injury)

Excessive force
Using more force/energy than is necessary

Extra time
A method of trying to decide the outcome of a match involving two equal additional periods of play not exceeding 15 minutes each

F

Feinting
An action which attempts to confuse an opponent. The Laws define permitted and 'illegal' feinting

Field of play (pitch)
The playing area confined by the touchlines and goal lines and goal nets where used

G

Goal line technology (GLT)
Electronic system which immediately informs the referee when a goal has been scored i.e. the ball has wholly passed over the goal line in the goal (see Law 1 for details)

H

Holding offence
A holding offence occurs only when a player's contact with an opponent's body or equipment impedes the opponent's movement

Hybrid system
A combination of artificial and natural materials to create a playing surface which requires sunlight, water, air circulation and mowing

I

Impede
To delay, block or prevent an opponent's action or movement

Indirect free kick
A free kick from which a goal can only be scored if another player (of any team) touches the ball after it has been kicked

Intercept
To prevent a ball reaching its intended destination

K

Kick
The ball is kicked when a player makes contact with it the foot and/or the ankle

Kicks from the penalty mark
Method of deciding the result of a match by each team alternately taking kicks until one team has scored one more goal and both teams have taken the same number of kicks (unless during the first 5 kicks for each team, one team could not equal the other team's score even if they scored from all their remaining kicks)

N

Negligible
Insignificant, minimal

O

Offence
An action which breaks/violates the Laws of the Game

Offensive, insulting or abusive language
Verbal or physical behaviour which is rude, hurtful, disrespectful; punishable by a sending-off (red card)

Outside agent
Any animal, object or structure, etc., as well as any person who is not a match official or on the team list (players, substitutes and team officials)

P

Penalise
To punish, usually by stopping play and awarding a free kick or penalty kick to the opposing team (see also Advantage)

Play
Action by a player which makes contact with the ball

Playing distance
Distance to the ball which allows a player to touch the ball by extending the foot/leg or jumping or, for goalkeepers, jumping with arms extended. Distance depends on the physical size of the player

Q

Quick free kick
A free kick taken (with the referee's permission) very quickly after play was stopped

R

Reckless
Any action (usually a tackle or challenge) by a player which disregards (ignores) the danger to, or consequences for, the opponent

Restart
Any method of resuming play after it has been stopped

Restart position
A player's position at a restart is determined by the position of their feet or any part of their body which is touching the ground, except as outlined in Law 11 – Offside

S

Sanction
Disciplinary action taken by the referee

Save
An action by a player to stop or attempt to stop the ball when it is going into or very close to the goal using any part of the body except the hands/arms (unless a goalkeeper within their own penalty area)

Sending-off
Disciplinary action when a player is required to leave the field for the remainder of the match having committed a sending-off offence (indicated by a red card); if the match has started the player cannot be replaced.
A team official may also be sent off.

Serious foul play
A tackle or challenge for the ball that endangers the safety of an opponent or uses excessive force or brutality; punishable by a sending-off (red card)

Signal
Physical indication from the referee or any match official; usually involves movement of the hand or arm or flag, or use of the whistle (referee only)

Simulation
An action which creates a wrong/false impression that something has occurred when it has not (see also Deceive); committed by a player to gain an unfair advantage

Spirit of the game
The main/essential principles/ethos of football as a sport but also within a particular match (see Law 5)

Suspend
To stop a match for a period of time with the intention of eventually restarting play e.g. due to fog, heavy rain, thunderstorm, serious injury

T

Tackle
A challenge for the ball with the foot (on the ground or in the air)

Team list
Official team document usually listing the players, substitutes and team officials

Team official
Any non-player listed on the official team list e.g. coach, physiotherapist, doctor (see Technical staff)

Technical area
Defined area (in stadiums) for the team officials which includes seating (see Law 1 for details)

Technical staff
Official non-playing team members listed on the official team list e.g. coach, physiotherapist, doctor (see Team official)

Temporary dismissal
A temporary suspension from the next part of the match for a player guilty of some/all cautionable offences (depending on competition rules)

U

Undue interference
Action/influence which is unnecessary

Unsporting behaviour
Unfair action/behaviour; punishable by a caution

V

Violent conduct
An action, which is not a challenge for the ball, which uses or attempts to use excessive force or brutality against an opponent or when a player deliberately strikes someone on the head or face unless the force used is negligible

Referee terms

Match official(s)
General term for person or persons responsible for controlling a football match on behalf of a football association and/or competition under whose jurisdiction the match is played

Referee
The main match official for a match who operates on the field of play. Other match officials operate under the referee's control and direction. The referee is the final/ultimate decision-maker

Other match officials
'On-field' match officials
Competitions may appoint other match officials to assist the referee:

- **Assistant referee**
  A match official with a flag positioned on one half of each touchline to assist the referee particularly with offside situations and goal kick/corner kick/throw-in decisions
- **Fourth official**
  A match official with responsibility for assisting the referee with both on-field and off-field matters, including overseeing the technical area, controlling substitutes etc.
- **Additional assistant referee (AAR)**
  A match official positioned on the goal line to assist the referee particularly with situations in/around the penalty area and goal/no-goal decisions
- **Reserve assistant referee**
  Assistant referee who will replace an assistant (and, if competition rules permit, a fourth official and/or AAR) who is unable to continue

'Video' match officials
These are the VAR and AVAR who assist the referee in accordance with the VAR protocol

- **Video assistant referee (VAR)**
  A current or former referee appointed to assist the referee by communicating information from replay footage only in relation to a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' in one of the reviewable categories
- **Assistant video assistant referee (AVAR)**
  A current or former referee/assistant referee appointed to assist the video assistant referee (VAR)

Practical Guidelines for Match Officials

Introduction

These guidelines contain practical advice for match officials which supplements the information in the Laws of the Game section.

Reference is made in Law 5 to referees operating within the framework of the Laws of the Game and the 'spirit of the game'. Referees are expected to use common sense and to apply the 'spirit of the game' when applying the Laws of the Game, especially when making decisions relating to whether a match takes place and/or continues.

This is especially true for the lower levels of football where it may not always be possible for the Law to be strictly applied. For example, unless there are safety issues, the referee should allow a game to start/continue if:

- one or more corner flags is missing
- there is a minor inaccuracy with the markings on the field of play such as the corner area, centre circle etc.
- the goalposts/crossbar are not white

In such cases, the referee should, with the agreement of the teams, play/continue the match and must submit a report to the appropriate authorities.

Key:

- AR = assistant referee
- AAR = additional assistant referee

Positioning, Movement and Teamwork

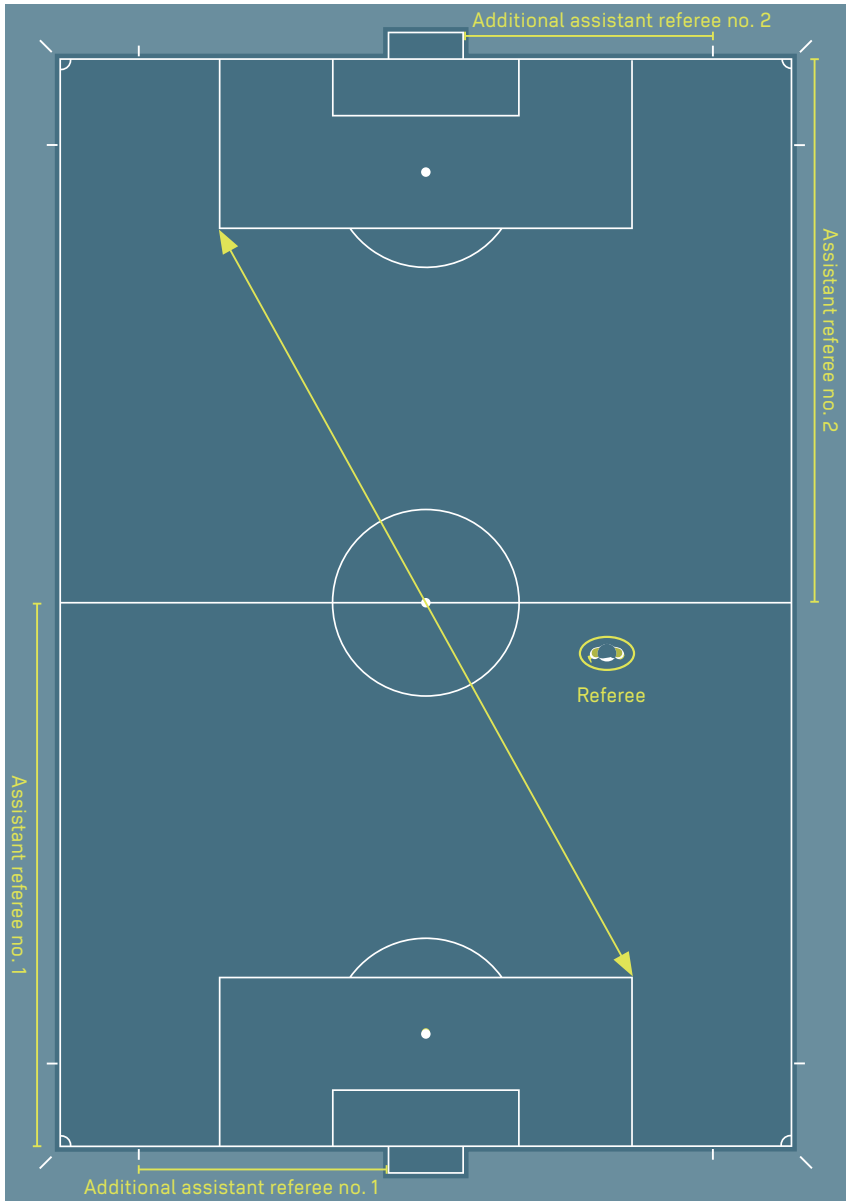
1. General positioning and movement

The best position is one from which the referee can make the correct decision. All recommendations about positioning must be adjusted using specific information about the teams, the players and events in the match.

The positions recommended in the graphics are basic guidelines. The reference to a "zone" emphasises that a recommended position is an area within which the referee is likely to be most effective. The zone may be larger, smaller or differently shaped depending on the exact match circumstances.

Recommendations:

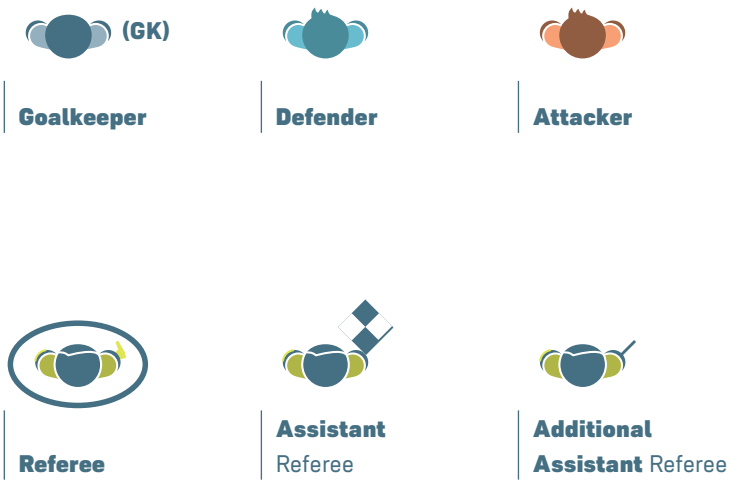
- The play should be between the referee and the lead AR
- The lead AR should be in the referee's field of vision so the referee should usually use a wide diagonal system
- Staying towards the outside of the play makes it easier to keep play and the lead AR in the referee's field of vision
- The referee should be close enough to see play without interfering with play
- "What needs to be seen" is not always in the vicinity of the ball. The referee should also pay attention to:
  - player confrontations off the ball
  - possible offences in the area towards which play is moving
  - offences occurring after the ball is played away



Positioning of assistant referees and additional assistant referees

The AR must be in line with the second-last defender or the ball if it is nearer to the goal line than the second-last defender. The AR must always face the field of play, even when running. Side-to-side movement should be used for short distances. This is especially important when judging offside as it gives the AR a better line of vision.

The AAR position is behind the goal line except where it is necessary to move onto the goal line to judge a goal/no goal situation. The AAR is not allowed to enter the field of play unless there are exceptional circumstances.



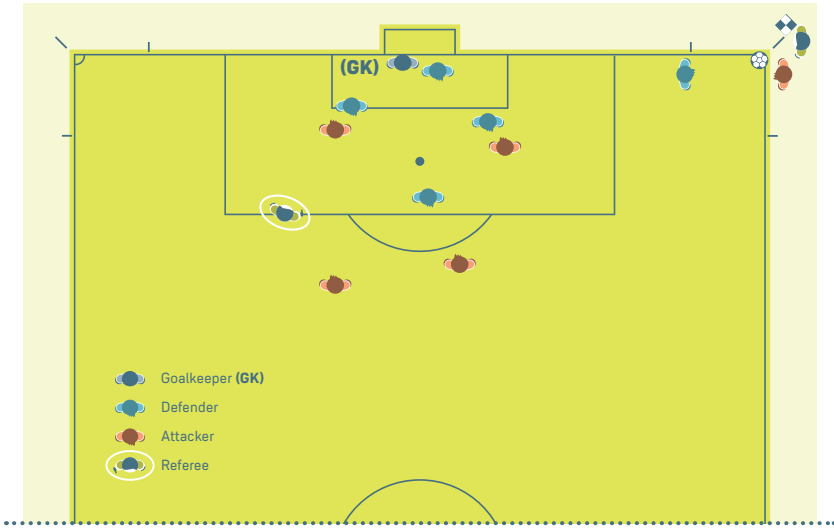
2. Positioning and teamwork

Consultation

When dealing with disciplinary issues, eye contact and a basic discreet hand signal from the AR to the referee may be sufficient. When direct consultation is required, the AR may advance 2–3 metres onto the field of play if necessary. When talking, the referee and AR should both face the field of play to avoid being heard by others and to observe the players and field of play.

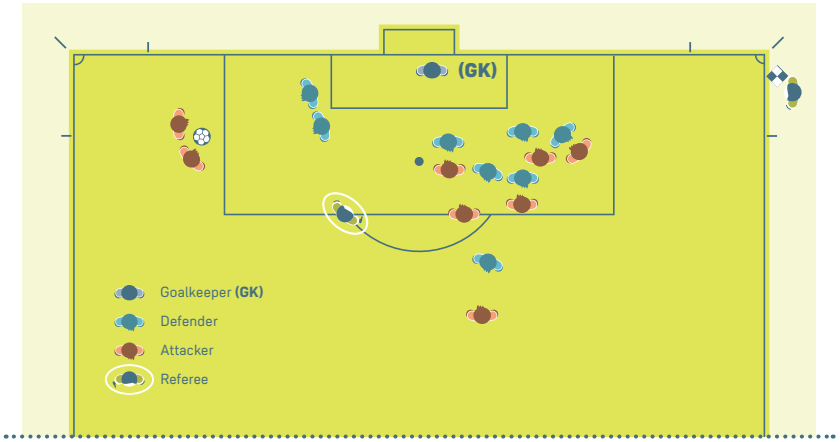
Corner kick

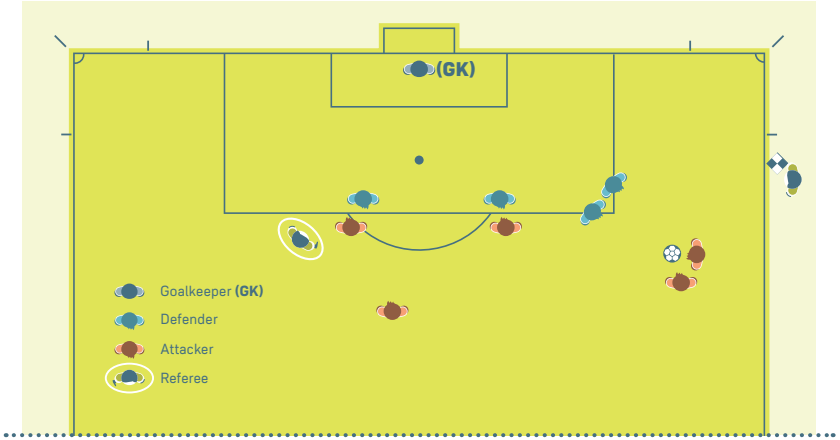
The AR's position for a corner kick is behind the corner flag in line with the goal line but the AR must not interfere with the player taking the corner kick and must check that the ball is properly placed in the corner area.

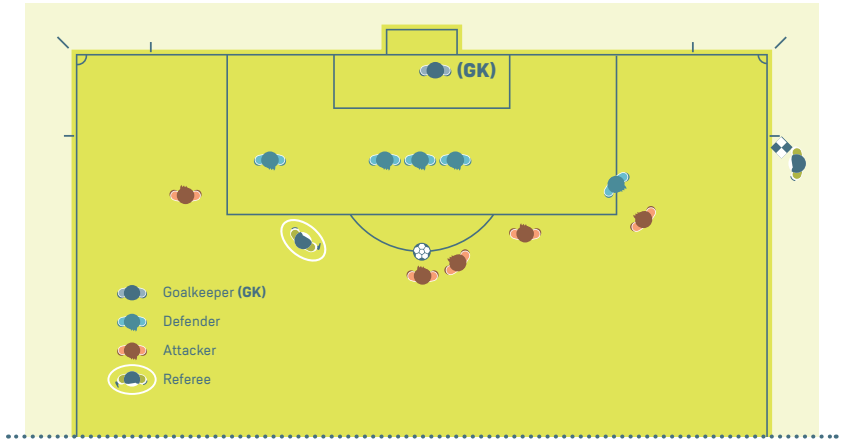


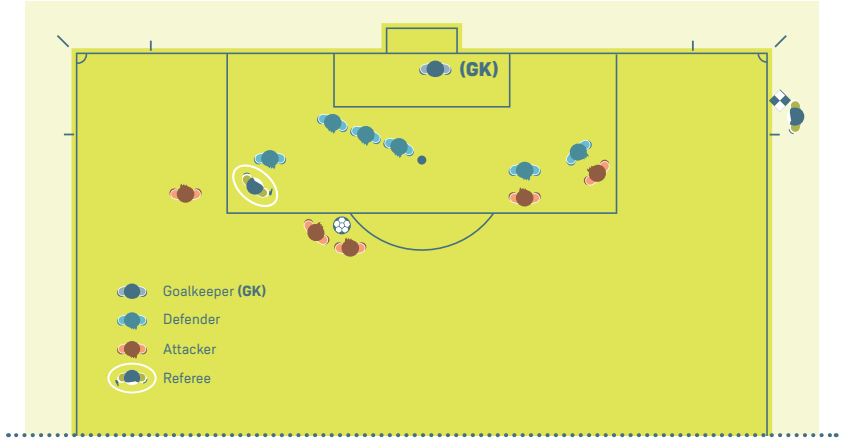
Free kick

The AR's position for a free kick must be in line with the second-last defender to check the offside line. However, the AR must be ready to follow the ball by moving down the touchline towards the corner flag if there is a direct shot on goal.







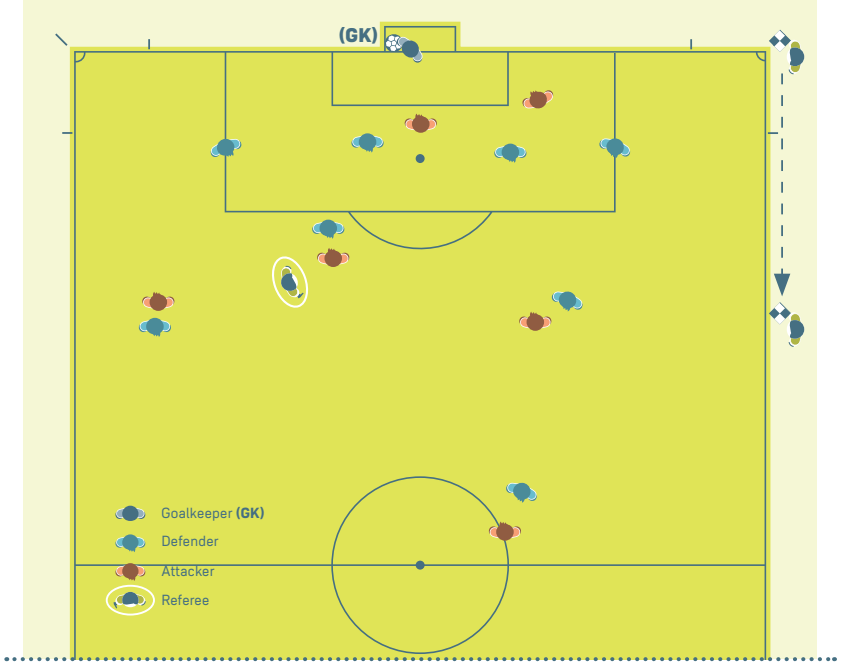


Goal/no goal

When a goal has been scored and there is no doubt about the decision, the referee and assistant referee must make eye contact and the assistant referee must then move quickly 25–30 metres along the touchline towards the halfway line without raising the flag.

When a goal has been scored but the ball appears still to be in play, the assistant referee must first raise the flag to attract the referee's attention then continue with the normal goal procedure of running quickly 25–30 metres along the touchline towards the halfway line.

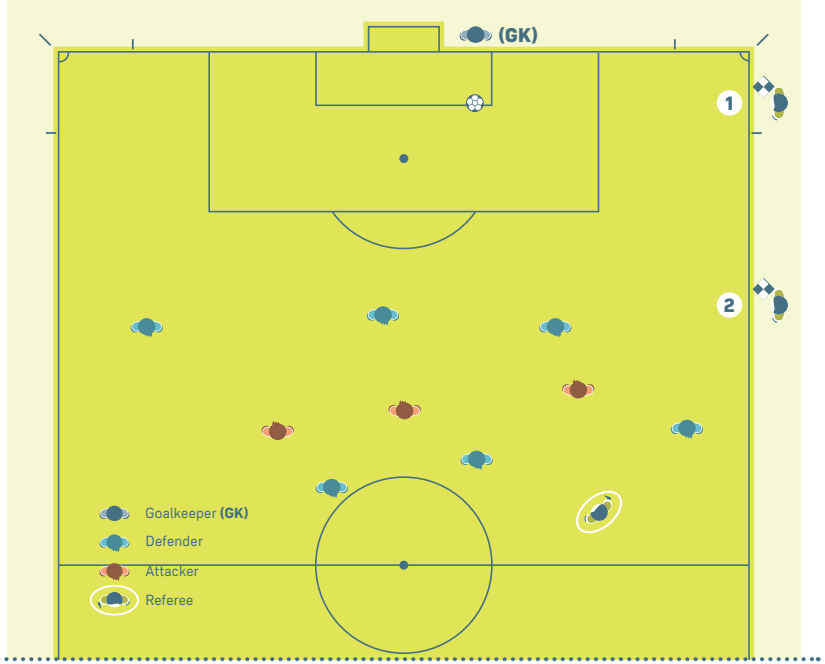
On occasions when the whole of the ball does not cross the goal line and play continues as normal because a goal has not been scored, the referee must make eye contact with the assistant referee and if necessary give a discreet hand signal.



Goal kick

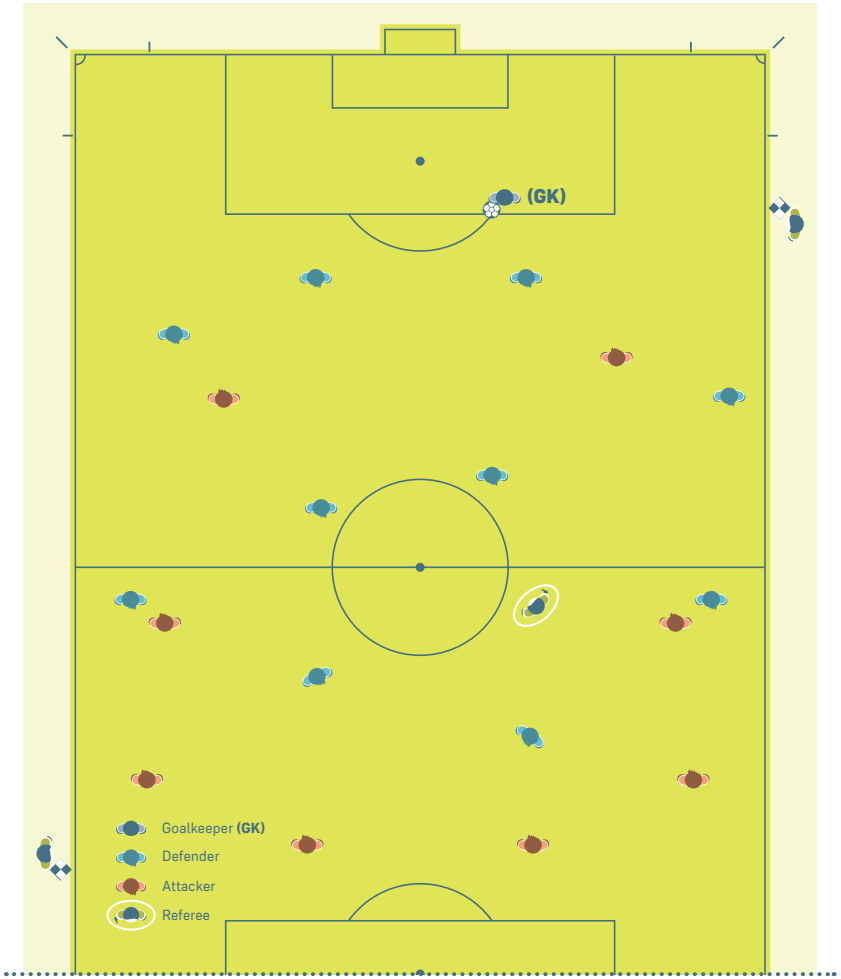
The AR must first check if the ball is inside the goal area. If the ball is not placed correctly, the AR must not move from the position and must make eye contact with the referee and raise the flag. Once the ball is placed correctly inside the goal area, the AR must take a position to check the offside line.

However, if there is an AAR, the AR should take up a position in line with the offside line and the AAR must be positioned at the intersection of the goal line and the goal area, and check if the ball is placed inside the goal area. If the ball is not placed correctly, the AAR must communicate this to the referee.



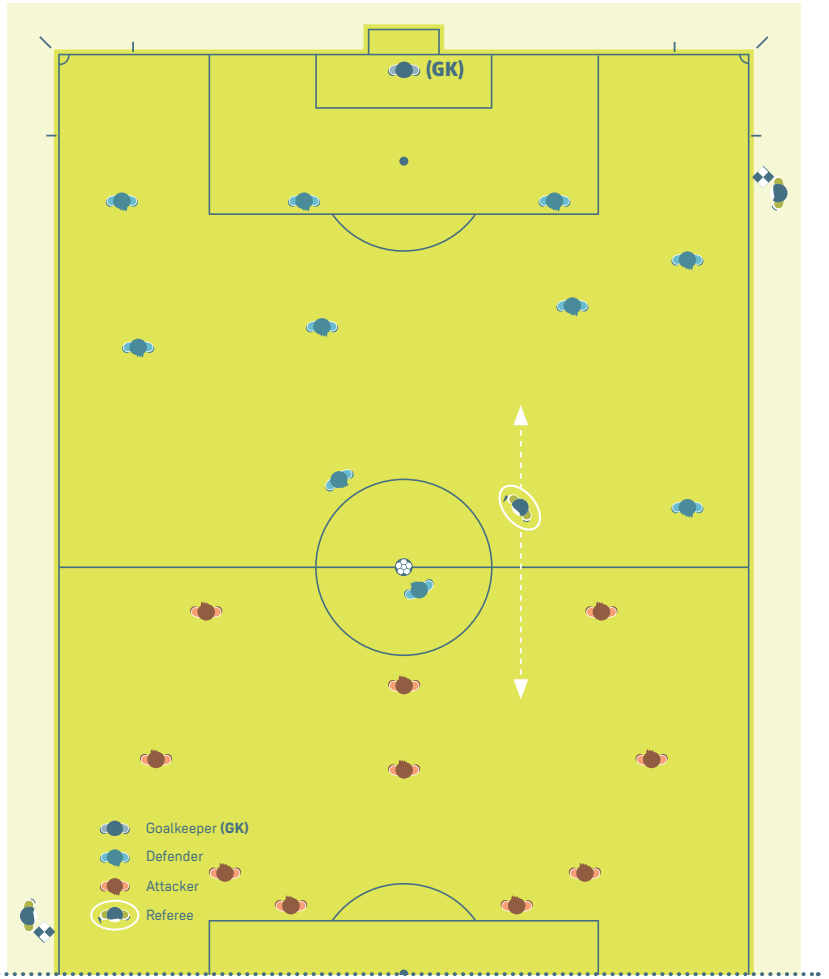
Goalkeeper releasing the ball

The AR must take a position in line with the edge of the penalty area and check that the goalkeeper does not handle the ball outside the penalty area. Once the goalkeeper has released the ball, the AR must take a position to check the offside line.



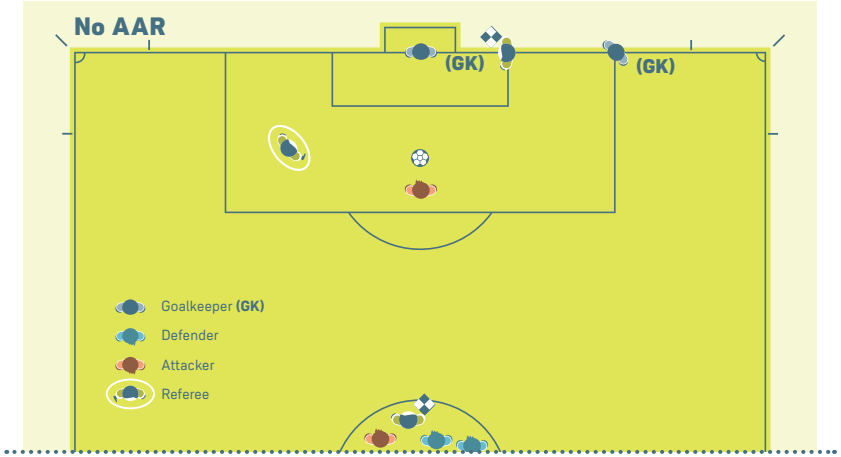
Kick-off

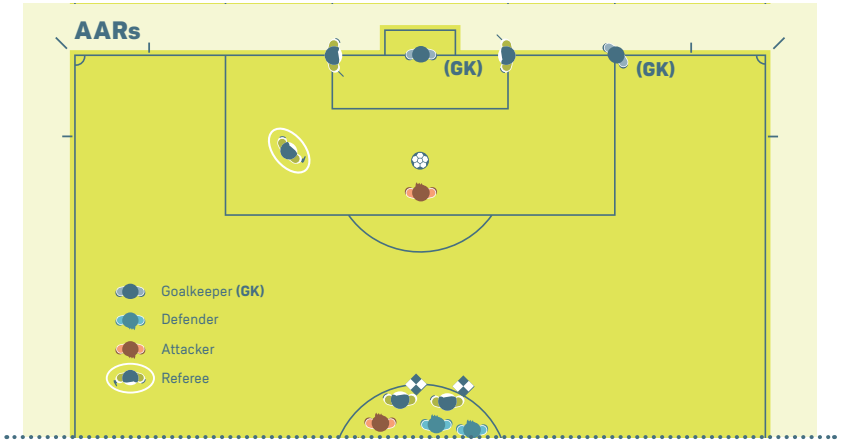
The ARs must be in line with the second-last defender.



Kicks from the penalty mark

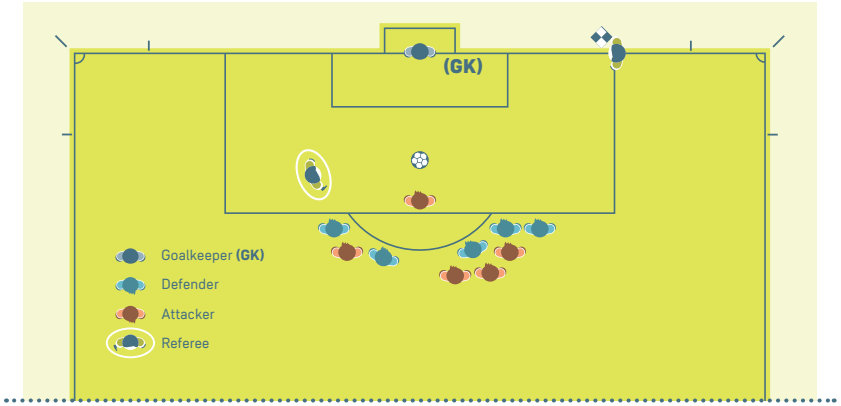
One AR must be positioned at the intersection of the goal line and the goal area. The other AR must be situated in the centre circle to control the players. If there are AARs, they must be positioned at each intersection of the goal line and the goal area, to the right and left of the goal respectively, except where GLT is in use when only one AAR is required. In this case AAR2 and AR1 should monitor the players in the centre circle and AR2 and the fourth official should monitor the technical areas.



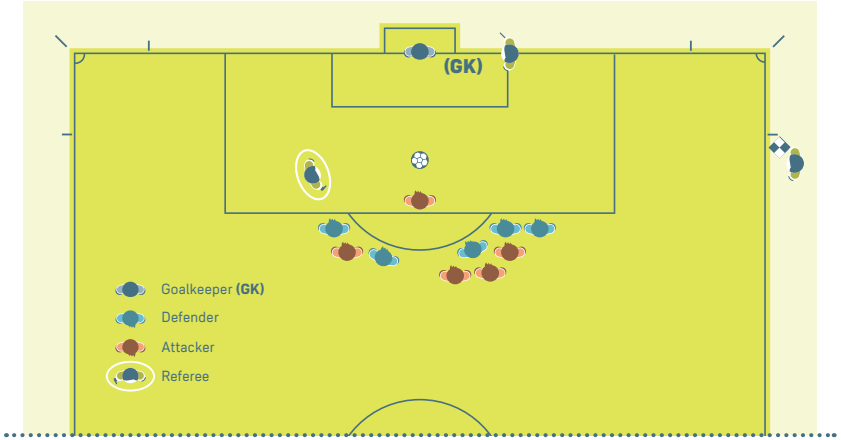


Penalty kick

The AR must be positioned at the intersection of the goal line and the penalty area.



Where there are AARs the AAR must be positioned at the intersection of the goal line and the goal area and the AR is positioned in line with the penalty mark (which is the offside line).



Mass confrontation

In situations of mass confrontation, the nearest AR may enter the field of play to assist the referee. The other AR must observe and record details of the incident. The fourth official should remain in the vicinity of the technical areas.

Required distance

When a free kick is awarded very close to the AR, the AR may enter the field of play (usually at the request of the referee) to help ensure that the players are positioned 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball. In this case, the referee must wait until the AR is back in position before restarting play.

Substitution

If there is no fourth official, the AR moves to the halfway line to assist with the substitution procedure; the referee must wait until the AR is back in position before restarting play.

If there is a fourth official, the AR does not need to move to the halfway line as the fourth official carries out the substitution procedure unless there are several substitutions at the same time, in which case the AR moves to the halfway line to assist the fourth official.

Body Language, Communication and Whistle

1. Referees

Body language

Body language is a tool that the referee uses to:

- help control the match
- show authority and self-control

Body language is not an explanation of a decision.

Signals

See Law 5 for diagrams of signals

Whistle

The whistle is needed to:

- start play (first and second half of normal play and extra time), after a goal
- stop play:
  - for a free kick or penalty kick
  - if the match is suspended or abandoned
  - at the end of each half
- restart play for:
  - free kicks when the appropriate distance is required
  - penalty kicks
- restart play after it has been stopped for a:
  - caution or sending-off
  - injury
  - substitution

The whistle is NOT needed to:

- stop play for a clear:
  - goal kick, corner kick, throw-in or goal
- restart play from:
  - most free kicks, and a goal kick, corner kick, throw-in or dropped ball

A whistle which is used too frequently/unnecessarily will have less impact when it is needed.

If the referee wants the player(s) to wait for the whistle before restarting play (e.g. when ensuring that defending players are 9.15m (10 yd) from the ball at a free kick) the referee must clearly inform the attacking player(s) to wait for the whistle.

If the referee blows the whistle in error and play stops, play is restarted with a dropped ball.

2. Assistant referees

Beep signal

The beep signal system is an additional signal which is only used to gain the referee's attention. Situations when the signal beep may be useful include:

- offside
- offences (outside the view of the referee)
- throw-in, corner kick, goal kick or goal (tight decisions)

Electronic communication system

Where an electronic communication system is used, the referee will advise the ARs as to when it may be appropriate to use the communication system with, or instead of, a physical signal.

Flag technique

The AR's flag must always be unfurled and visible to the referee. This usually means the flag is carried in the hand closest to the referee. When making a signal, the AR stops running, faces the field of play, makes eye contact with the referee and raises the flag with a deliberate (not hasty or exaggerated) motion. The flag should be like an extension of the arm. The ARs must raise the flag using the hand that will be used for the next signal. If circumstances change and the other hand must be used, the AR should move the flag to the opposite hand below the waist. If the AR signals that the ball is out of play, the signal must be maintained until the referee acknowledges it.

If the AR signals for a sending-off offence and the signal is not seen immediately:

- if play has been stopped, the restart may be changed in accordance with the Laws (free kick, penalty kick, etc.)
- if play has restarted, the referee may still take disciplinary action but not penalise the offence with a free kick or penalty kick

Gestures

As a general rule, the AR should not use obvious hand signals. However, in some instances, a discreet hand signal may assist the referee. The hand signal should have a clear meaning which should have been agreed in the pre-match discussion.

Signals

See Law 6 for diagrams of signals

Corner kick/goal kick

When the ball wholly passes over the goal line the AR raises the flag with the right hand (better line of vision) to inform the referee that the ball is out of play and then if it is:

- near to the AR – indicate whether it is a goal kick or a corner kick
- far from the AR – make eye contact and follow the referee's decision

When the ball clearly passes over the goal line the AR does not need to raise the flag to indicate that the ball has left the field of play. If the goal kick or corner kick decision is obvious, it is not necessary to give a signal, especially when the referee gives a signal.

Fouls

The AR must raise the flag when a foul or misconduct is committed in the immediate vicinity or out of the referee's vision. In all other situations, the AR must wait and offer an opinion if it is required and then inform the referee what was seen and heard, and which players were involved.

Before signalling for an offence, the AR must determine that:

- the offence was out of the referee's view or the referee's view was obstructed
- the referee would not have applied the advantage

When an offence occurs which requires a signal from the AR, the AR must:

- raise the flag with the same hand that will also be used for the remainder of the signal – this gives the referee a clear indication as to who will be awarded the free kick
- make eye contact with the referee
- give the flag a slight wave back and forth (avoiding any excessive or aggressive movement)

The AR must use the "wait and see technique" to allow play to continue and not raise the flag when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from the advantage; it is therefore very important for the AR to make eye contact with the referee.

Fouls inside the penalty area

When a foul is committed by a defender inside the penalty area out of the vision of the referee, especially if near to the AR's position, the AR must first make eye contact with the referee to see where the referee is positioned and what action has been taken. If the referee has not taken any action, the AR must signal with the flag, use the electronic beep signal and then visibly move down the touchline towards the corner flag.

Fouls outside the penalty area

When a foul is committed by a defender outside the penalty area (near the boundary of the penalty area), the AR should make eye contact with the referee, to see the referee's position and what action has been taken, and signal with the flag if necessary. In counter-attack situations, the AR should be able to give information such as whether or not a foul has been committed and whether a foul was committed inside or outside the penalty area, and what disciplinary action should be taken. The AR should make a clear movement along the touchline towards the halfway line to indicate when the offence took place outside the penalty area.

Goal – no goal

When it is clear that the ball has wholly passed over the goal line in the goal, the AR must make eye contact with the referee without giving any additional signal.

When a goal has been scored but it is not clear whether the ball has passed over the line, the AR must first raise the flag to attract the referee's attention and then confirm the goal.

Offside

The first action of the AR for an offside decision is to raise the flag (using the right hand, giving the AR a better line of vision) and then, if the referee stops play, use the flag to indicate the area of the field of play in which the offence occurred. If the flag is not immediately seen by the referee, the AR must maintain the signal until it has been acknowledged or the ball is clearly in the control of the defending team.

Penalty kick

If the goalkeeper blatantly moves off the goal line before the ball is kicked and prevents a goal from being scored, the AR should indicate the encroachment according to the pre-match instructions from the referee.

Substitution

Once the AR has been informed (by the fourth official or team official) that a substitution is requested, the AR must signal this to the referee at the next stoppage.

Throw-in

When the ball wholly passes over the touchline:

- near to the AR – a direct signal should be made to indicate the direction of the throw-in
- far from the AR and the throw-in decision is an obvious one – the AR must make a direct signal to indicate the direction of the throw-in
- far from the AR and the AR is in doubt about the direction of the throw-in – the AR must raise the flag to inform the referee that the ball is out of play, make eye contact with the referee and follow the referee's signal

3. Additional assistant referees

The AARs use a radio communication system (not flags) to communicate with the referee. If the radio communication system fails to work, the AARs will use an electronic signal beep flagstick. AARs do not usually use obvious hand signals but, in some instances, a discreet hand signal may give valuable support to the referee. The hand signal should have a clear meaning and such signals should be agreed in the pre-match discussion.

The AAR, having assessed that the ball has wholly passed over the goal line within the goal, must:

- immediately inform the referee via the communication system that a goal should be awarded
- make a clear signal with the left arm perpendicular to the goal line pointing towards the centre of the field (flagstick in the left hand is also required). This signal is not required when the ball has very clearly passed over the goal line.

The referee will make the final decision.

Other advice

1. Advantage

The referee may play advantage whenever an offence occurs but should consider the following in deciding whether to apply the advantage or stop play:

- the severity of the offence – if the offence warrants a sending-off, the referee must stop play and send off the player unless there is a clear opportunity to score a goal
- the position where the offence was committed - the closer to the opponent's goal, the more effective the advantage can be
- the chances of an immediate, promising attack
- the atmosphere of the match

2. Allowance for time lost

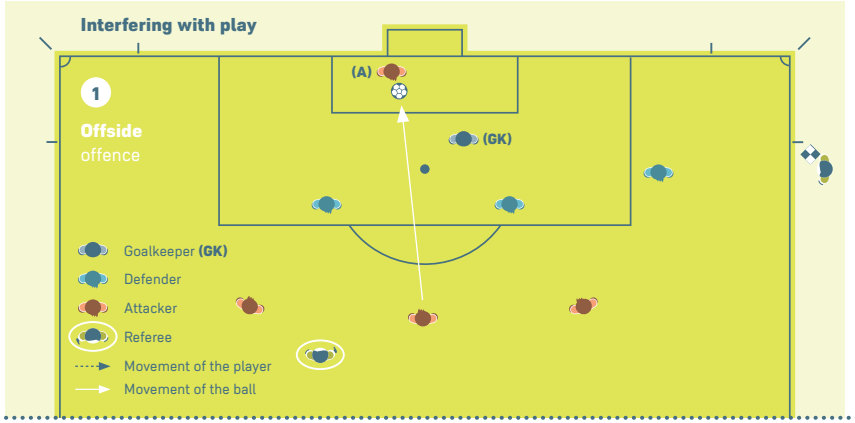
Many stoppages in play are entirely natural (e.g. throw-ins, goal kicks). An allowance is made only when delays are excessive.

3. Holding an opponent

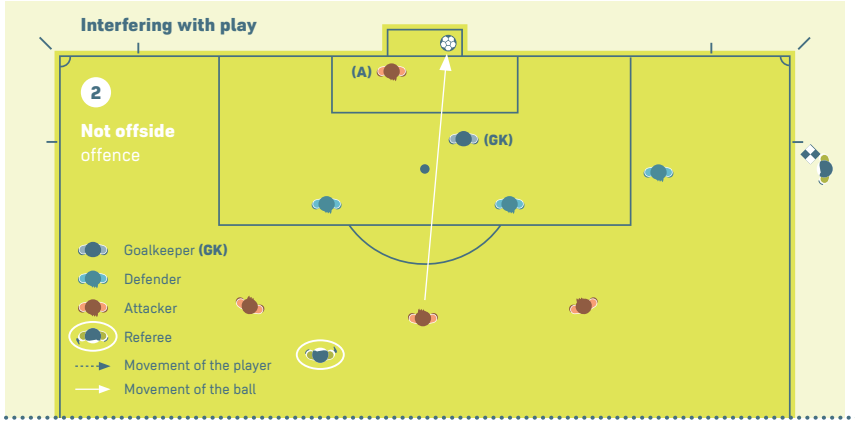
Referees are reminded to make an early intervention and to deal firmly with holding offences, especially inside the penalty area at corner kicks and free kicks. To deal with these situations:

- the referee must warn any player holding an opponent before the ball is in play
- caution the player if the holding continues before the ball is in play
- award a direct free kick or penalty kick and caution the player if it happens once the ball is in play

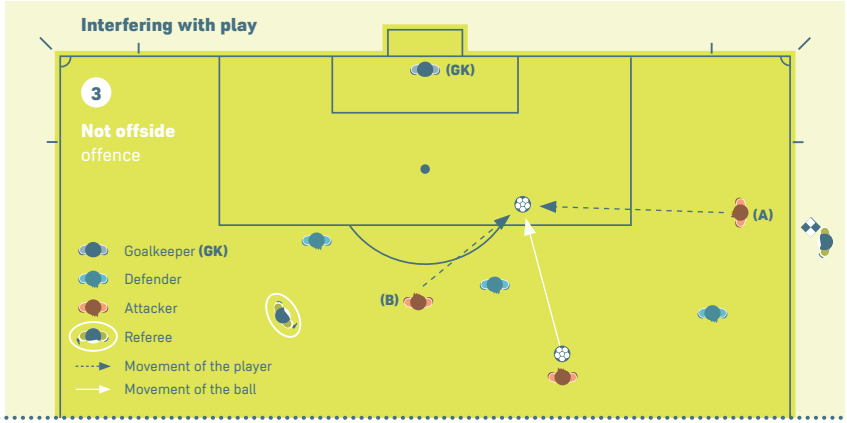
4. Offside



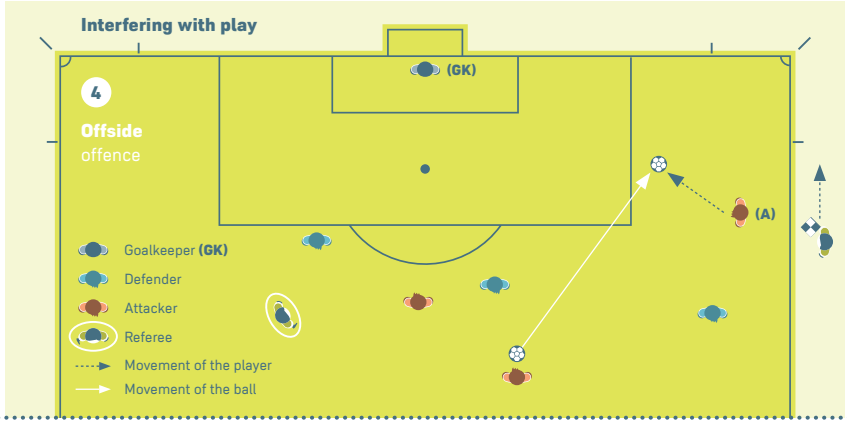
An attacker **in an offside position** (A), not interfering with an opponent, **touches the ball**. The assistant referee must raise the flag when the player **touches the ball**.



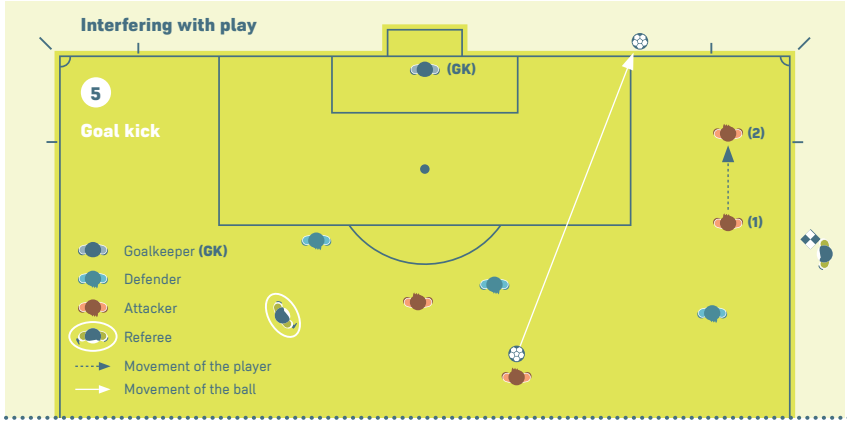
An attacker **in an offside position** (A), not interfering with an opponent, **does not touch the ball**. The player did not touch the ball, so cannot be penalised.



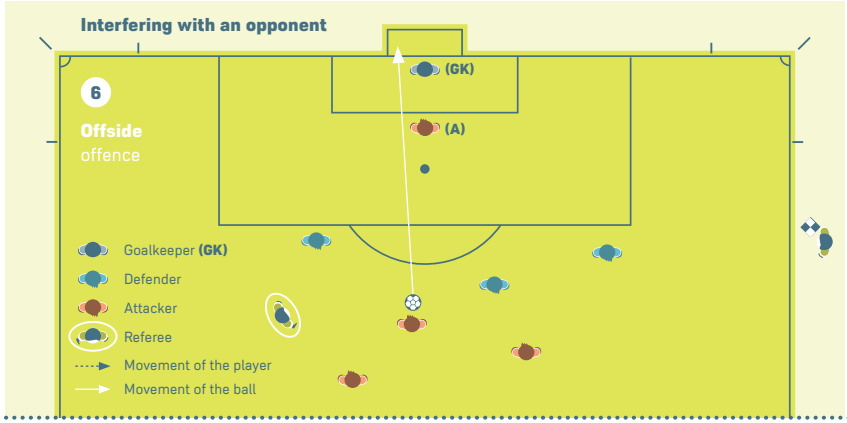
An attacker **in an offside position** (A) runs towards the ball and a team-mate **in an onside position** (B) also runs towards the ball and plays it. (A) did not touch the ball, so cannot be penalised.



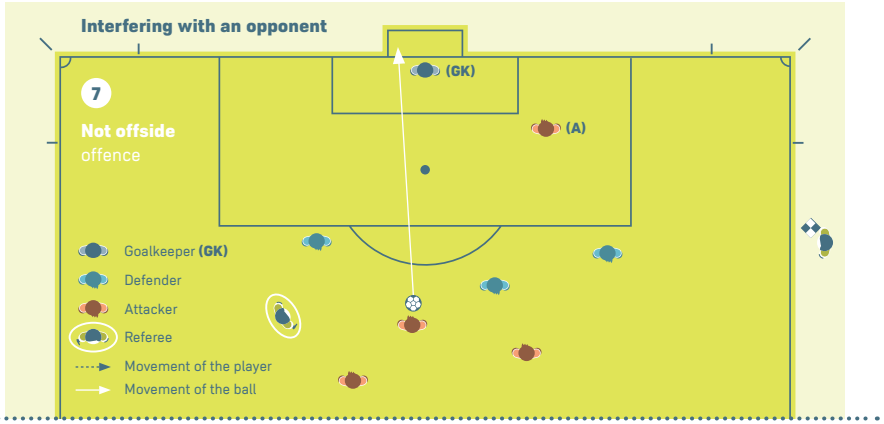
A player **in an offside position** (A) may be penalised before playing or touching the ball, if, in the opinion of the referee, no other team-mate in an onside position has the opportunity to play the ball.



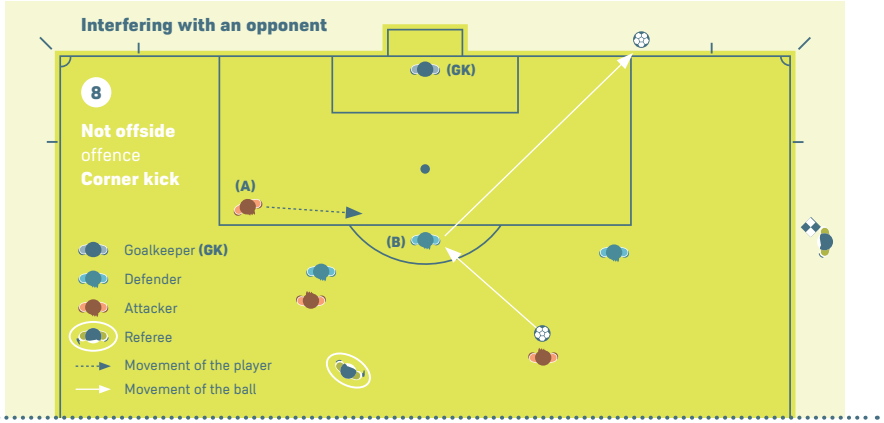
An attacker **in an offside position** (1) runs towards the ball and **does not touch** the ball. The assistant referee must signal **"goal kick"**.



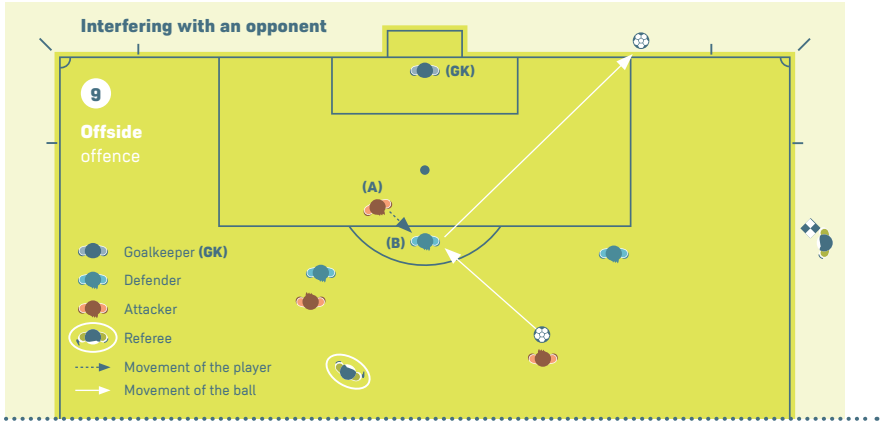
An attacker **in an offside position** (A) is clearly obstructing the goalkeeper's line of vision. The player must be penalised for preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball.



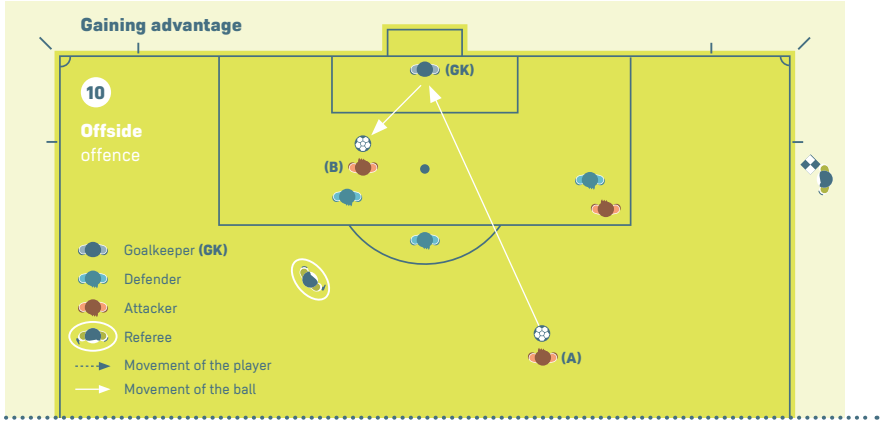
An attacker **in an offside position** (A) is **not** clearly obstructing the goalkeeper's line of vision or challenging an opponent for the ball.



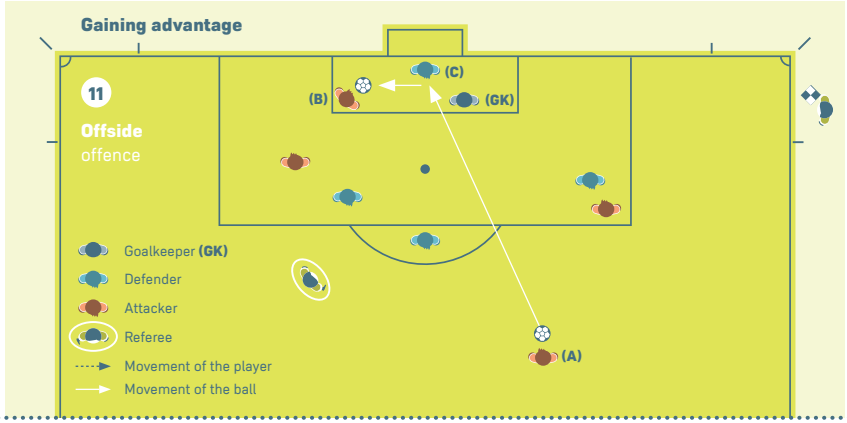
An attacker **in an offside position** (A) runs towards the ball but does not prevent the opponent from playing or being able to play the ball.
(A) is **not** challenging an opponent (B) for the ball.



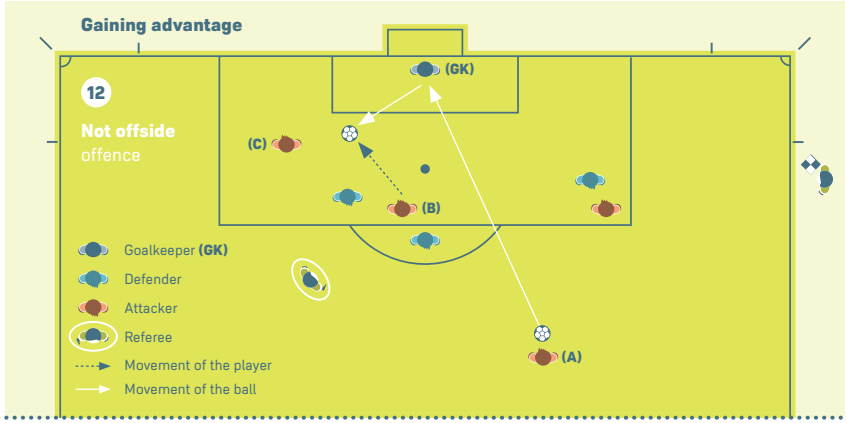
An attacker **in an offside position** (A) runs towards the ball preventing the opponent (B) from playing or being able to play the ball by challenging the opponent for the ball. (A) is challenging an opponent (B) for the ball.



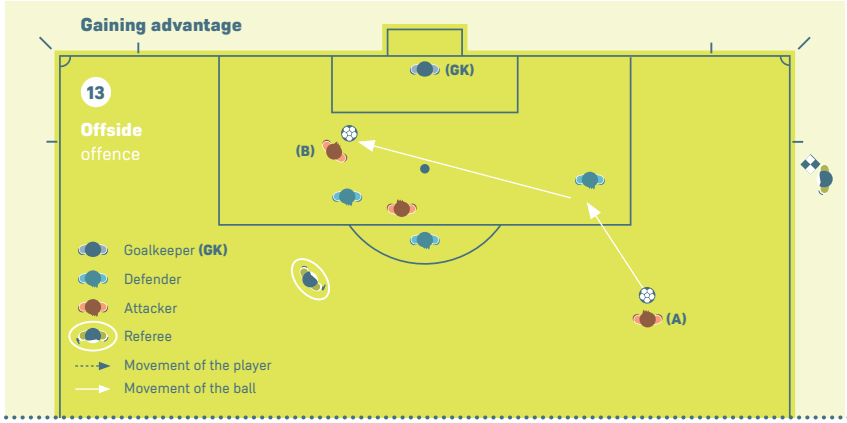
An attacker **in an offside position** (B) is penalised for **playing or touching the ball** that rebounds, is deflected or is played from a deliberate save by the goalkeeper having been **in an offside position** when the ball was last touched or is played by a team-mate.



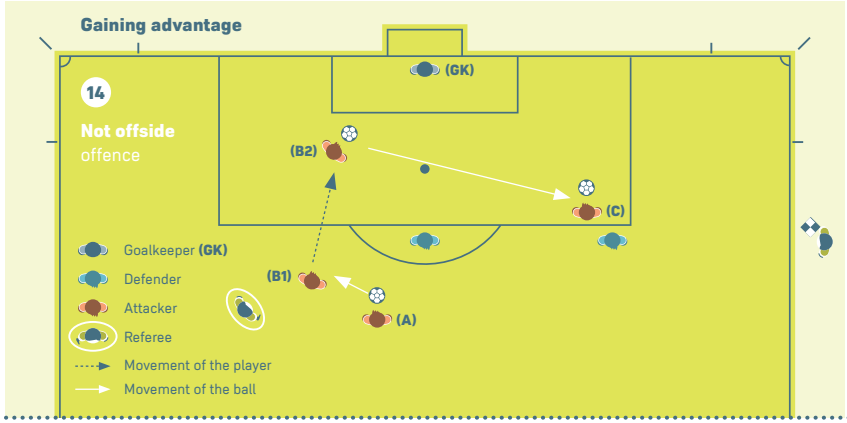
An attacker **in an offside position** (B) is penalised for **playing or touching the ball** that rebounds or is deflected from a deliberate save by a player from the defending team (C) having been **in an offside position** when the ball was last touched or is played by a team-mate.



The shot by a team-mate (A) rebounds from the goalkeeper, (B) is in an onside position and plays the ball, (C) **in an offside position** is not penalised because the player did not gain an advantage from being in that position because the player did not touch the ball.



The shot by a team-mate (A) rebounds off or is deflected by an opponent to attacker (B) who is penalised for **playing or touching the ball** having previously been **in an offside position**.



An attacker (C) is **in an offside position**, not interfering with an opponent, when a team-mate (A) passes the ball to player (B1) in an onside position who runs towards the opponents' goal and passes the ball (B2) to team-mate (C). Attacker (C) was **in an onside position** when the ball was passed, so cannot be penalised.

5. Injuries

The safety of the players is of paramount importance and the referee should facilitate the work of the medical personnel, especially in the case of a serious injury and/or an assessment of a head injury. This will include respecting and assisting with agreed assessment/treatment protocols.

6. Treatment/assessment after a caution/sending-off

Previously, an injured player who received medical attention on the field of play had to leave before the restart. This can be unfair if an opponent caused the injury as the offending team has a numerical advantage when play restarts.

However, this requirement was introduced because players often unsportingly used an injury to delay the restart for tactical reasons.

As a balance between these two unfair situations, The IFAB has decided that only for a physical offence where the opponent is cautioned or sent off, an injured player can be quickly assessed/treated and then remain on the field of play.

In principle, the delay should not be any longer than currently occurs when a medical person(s) comes onto the field to assess an injury. The difference is that the point at which the referee used to require the medical person(s) and the player to leave is now the point at which the medical staff leave but the player can remain.

To ensure the injured player does not use/extend the delay unfairly, referees are advised to:

- be aware of the match situation and any potential tactical reason to delay the restart
- inform the injured player that if medical treatment is required it must be quick
- signal for the medical person(s) (not the stretchers) and, if possible, remind them to be quick

When the referee decides play should restart either:

- the medical person(s) leaves and the player remains or
- the player leaves for further assessment/treatment (stretcher signal may be necessary)

As a general guide, the restart should not be delayed for more than about 20–25 seconds beyond the point when everyone was ready for play to restart, except in the case of a serious injury and/or an assessment of a head injury.

The referee must make full allowance for the stoppage.

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

IFAB®

THE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION BOARD

IFAB®

THE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION BOARD

FA WALES FIFA