

OFFSIDE – Law 11

The Three Fundamental Elements of the Offside Law

Fact: POSITION

Is the player:

1. In the Opponents Half of the Field, and
 2. *Ahead of the Ball, and*
 3. *Ahead of the Second to Last Defender?*
- I. A player in his or her own half of the field of play is not in an offside position.
 - II. A player who is even with or behind the ball is not in an offside position.
 - III. A player who is even with the second to last defender, or the last two opponents, is not in an offside position.

Judgment: TIME

When do you judge the player's position? At the moment the ball is touched or played by a teammate.

- I. It is the position of the player at the instant the ball is touched or played by a teammate that must be judged, not the player's position at the time the ball is received.
- II. A player who is in an onside position at the instant a teammate shoots or passes the ball to the player does not become offside should he/she go forward during the flight of the ball.

Opinion: PARTICIPATION

Does the player participate in the play?

A player in an offside position must not be penalized unless he/she is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

Interfering with play, **or** interfering with an opponent, **or** gaining an advantage by being in that offside position.

EXCEPTIONS

It is not an offense when a player in an offside position receives the ball directly from: **a goal kick, or a corner kick, or a throw-in.**

- I. Merely being in an offside position **IS NOT** a violation of the Law.
- II. Assistant referees are to signal for offside, NOT offside position.

How is play restarted when a player is called for offside?

An indirect free kick is taken by the opposing team from the place where the offside player was when the teammate played the ball.

(Exception: If the infringement occurs within the goal area, the free kick may be taken from anywhere within the goal area.)

PARTICIPATION is the Key Element of the Offside Law

The *Laws of the Game* are intended to keep the game flowing. Stopping the game to penalize a player in an offside position who is not actively participating violates both the spirit of the Law and the letter of the Law. It is not an offense in itself to be in an offside position. Prior to World Cup USA 94, FIFA instructed the referees and assistant referees to only signal for offside when absolutely certain that a violation has occurred. These instructions are now taught at every level of soccer. When in doubt, assistant referees are to keep the flags down.

The Law states that (to be called offside) a player must interfere with play or an opponent, or gain an advantage *at the moment the ball touches or is played by a teammate*. The Law is applied should a player subsequently gain an advantage directly from play. Offside may be called, for example, if a player takes a shot and the ball deflects from the goalpost, cross bar, or the goalkeeper, to a teammate who was in an offside position when the ball was played. The free kick is taken from where the offside player was at the moment the teammate played the ball.