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Advice to Referees
2013-14

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Introduction

Advice to Referees provides U.S. Soccer's official interpretations of the FIFA Laws of the Game. All affiliated competitions and registered officials are expected to adhere to and implement this information to the fullest extent possible.

This resource is intended to be used in conjunction with the Laws of the Game and the Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees. U.S. Soccer's Advice to Referees provides an authoritative statement on relevant issues but not every possible scenario encountered by referees is contained in these pages. Therefore, the Laws of the Game and the Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees should continue to be referenced to determine a solution that best promotes the safety, equality and enjoyment of the players.

Please note that while this information can be helpful to officials working at all levels of competition, the content is most relevant for those referees officiating competitive youth games and above.

Notes

"Substituted players" are players who have been substituted, who are not permitted to return to the field in strict accordance with Law 3, and who nevertheless remain with their team in the bench or technical area. Whenever the term "substitute" is used, it will include substituted players.

In most cases in the Laws of the Game, the words "touch," "play," and "make contact with" are synonymous. This is not true in the case of a handling offense, where the touch, play, or contact with the ball by the offending player must be deliberate and made with the hands or arm.

An asterisk (*) is used for dropped balls to mean:

- (see Law 8 – Procedures)

An asterisk (*) is used for free kicks to mean:

- (See Law 13 – Position of Free Kick)

In both cases, the purpose is to call attention to special rules regarding locating dropped balls and free kicks where the original location would be inside the goal area.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

1.1 Safety

The safety of the players is most important. Sufficient time must be allowed for checking the safety of the field, the goals (e.g., anchoring), and other field equipment. Where a condition poses any danger, it must be brought to the attention of the home team coach or the local competition authority and corrected before any play is permitted. Where a condition may involve a violation of the Law but does not raise safety concerns (e.g., no corner flags), full details must be included in the match report but the match may be played.

The need for a field inspection cannot be ignored and a minimum of 30 minutes is recommended to complete all pre-game responsibilities.

1.2 Goals

The goal frame must be stable, secure, and firmly anchored in the ground. If portable goals are used, they must be checked in particular to confirm that the base is staked or counterweighted to prevent the frame from falling over. Persons must not be allowed to climb, sit on, or swing from any part of the goal. Inspection of the goals must be conducted in advance of every match, even if an inspection was observed being done in an earlier match.

Report any problems to the home teach coach or competition authority and do not permit play to start or resume where the problem involves safety.

1.3 Field Markings

Lines must be clear, accurate, and consistent with the rules of competition. However, missing or inaccurate lines (other than perimeter lines) can often be overlooked unless they are considered dangerous, so far outside the norm as to be unfair, or likely to detract from the enjoyment of the game.

Referees are encouraged to advise teams of any inaccuracies in field markings and, if the game is to be played, to make clear how these conditions will be treated by the referee team. Full details should be included in the match report.

1.4 Additions to the Goal Frame

Anything attached to the inside of the goal frame is not permitted. Anything attached to the outside of the crossbar, goalpost, or the base of a portable goal which might interfere with the path of a ball in the process of leaving the field is allowed (e.g., American football-style uprights, wheels on the goal frame) but a ball which makes contact with any of these outside additions to the goal frame must be judged to have left the field. The restart would be in accordance with Law 16 or Law 17.

The Laws of the Game do not permit the use of goal posts which are padded in any way.

1.5 Player Modifications to the Field

Players may not modify or change field markings or the placement of the goals or corner flags. This includes making unauthorized marks on the field, repositioning the goals, bending or removing corner flags, or altering the field surface. Such behavior could constitute misconduct.

1.6 Pre-Existing Conditions

Pre-existing conditions are things on, above, or overhanging the field which are neither dangerous nor movable and must be considered a part of the field. Examples include trees off the field whose branches overhang the field, wires running above the field, and covers on sprinkling or draining systems. Play does not stop merely because the ball makes contact with any pre-existing condition. If the ball leaves the field after contact with any item considered by the local rules of competition to be a pre-existing condition, the restart is in accordance with the Law, based on which team last played the ball.

1.7 The Technical Area

The technical area, also referred to as the bench or team area, is the space designated for each team's substitutes and team officials. At higher level competitions, various people may be listed on the team's roster other than players and substitutes: these are, by definition, team officials and are permitted to be in the technical area. In the absence of a team roster, the referee is entitled to consider anyone a team official (other than substitutes and players) who is in the technical area.

Many fields lack marked technical areas and this is acceptable since the area is not a required part of the field. However, since they serve to keep the teams and their officials separated and confined to a limited space, technical areas may serve a useful purpose where the lack of such separation and confinement has become a problem. If needed to assist with game control, U.S. Soccer recommends the referee roughly mark out technical areas using any items (e.g., cones, player equipment bags) available to him or her.

Law 2 – The Ball

2.1 Number of Balls

The local rules of competition should specify the number of game balls used. Whatever the number used, each ball specified for use in the match must be inspected to confirm that it meets the requirements of Law 2. Any ball that does not meet all requirements must be returned to the provider to be replaced or corrected. This initial inspection does not prevent the referee or another designated official ensuring the safety and legality of any ball offered for use during the match in place of the ball previously in use.

2.2 Ball Persons

If ball persons are assigned to assist in bringing balls back to the area of the field or in ensuring that an authorized ball is quickly available for a restart, the referee or another designated match official should meet with them in advance of the game to make sure they understand their responsibilities:

- They may not favor either team or any player.
- They must not comment for or against either team, any player, any specific action on the field, or any decision by the referee or an assistant referee.
- Providing an available ball takes precedence over retrieving a ball.
- They must take every opportunity to prevent an extra ball from entering the field.

2.3 Defective Ball

Although the most common way for a ball to become defective during a game is for it to irreparably lose air pressure, a ball can become defective in other ways as well. For example, a match may start with a ball which, unnoticed at the time, is the incorrect size for the age of the players. When this is discovered, the ball must be removed from use. The same would be true if the exterior of the ball became unsafe during play.

In most cases, the defective status of the ball is suspected and then confirmed at a stoppage. The ball is replaced and play restarts in accordance with the Laws of the Game (based on the cause of the stoppage). Sometimes, the problem becomes obvious during the game and play must be stopped solely due to the defective condition of the ball.

Results of a ball becoming defective under different circumstances¹:

Ball Becomes Defective	Action ²
During play	Stop play, restart with a dropped ball*
At a stoppage caused by the ball leaving the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After the ball leaves the field (or, if in the goal, after making contact with the goal frame) – restart in accordance with the reason the ball left the field• Before the ball leaves the field (or, if in the goal, before making contact with the goal frame) – restart with a dropped ball*

In play from a free kick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before the ball leaves the field – restart with a dropped ball* After the ball leaves the field – restart as the Law requires based on the stoppage After entering the goal (or after making contact with any part of the goal frame and then entering the goal), restart with kick-off (goal counts)
In play from a penalty kick in regular time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before the ball contacts any part of the goal frame or a player – retake the penalty kick Contacts any part of the goal frame or a player, stays on the field – restart with a dropped ball* Contacts any part of the goal frame or a player, leaves the field other than going into the goal – restart with a goal kick or corner kick as appropriate After entering the goal (or after making contact with any part of the goal frame or a player and then entering the goal), restart with a kick-off (goal counts)
In play from a penalty kick in extended time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before contacting any part of the goal frame or the goalkeeper – retake the penalty kick Contacts any part of the goal frame or the goalkeeper, stays on the field – end the period of play After entering the goal (or after contacting any part of the goal frame or the goalkeeper and then entering the goal), end the period of play (goal counts)
In play from a kick from the mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before it contacts any part of the goal frame or the goalkeeper – retake the kick Contacts any part of the goal frame or the goalkeeper, does not enter the goal – that kick is over and recorded as unsuccessful After entering the goal (or after contacting any part of the goal frame or the goalkeeper and then entering the goal), that kick is over, recorded as successful

¹Ball becoming defective includes any condition of the ball which would make the ball illegal under Law 2 (or as modified for small sided games).

²In all scenarios, the action includes replacing the ball.

Law 3 – The Number of Players

3.1 The Number of Players, Substitutes, and Substitutions

Except for matches using fewer than 11 players per team, seven is the minimum number of players needed for a match to start and continue and eleven is the maximum number of players allowed on the field during play. The number of substitutes and the number of allowed substitutions are set by the local rules of competition. The officiating team must also be aware of these local rules regarding the conditions under which a substitution is made.

3.2 Rosters

Each team normally provides the referee with a roster which lists the starting players, the substitutes, and (depending on the local rules of competition) the team officials who are permitted to be in the team bench or technical areas. Although the roster itself must be provided in advance of the game and the team may not add new names after the start of play (unless these requirements are modified by the local rules), a team may adjust the identities of those who are players and those who are substitutes prior to the actual start of play. Such adjustments are not considered substitutions nor may a team be charged with a substitution as a result and no misconduct has been committed by the players or substitutes who have changed places.

Whether notified of a change in placement on the roster or not prior to the opening whistle, the referee should accept the designation of player or substitute based on those who have presented themselves as players before the start of the game and those who remain on the team bench. The referee will adjust the roster accordingly but, where no notification was given in advance, include details about the adjustments in the match report. Once the game starts, any changes to the status of players and substitutes can only occur through the formal substitution process.

3.3 Late-Arriving Player

A rostered player may be absent at the beginning of the match but is still considered a player unless the roster is adjusted in accordance with the local rules of competition. If such an adjustment is made, then the absent player has become a substitute and, upon his or her late arrival, remains a substitute until put on the field through the normal substitution process. If no adjustment is made, then the team will necessarily start the game with fewer players on the field than its maximum and, as a result, the player may be allowed to enter the field upon arrival, provided that he or she:

- meets all documentation requirements (e.g., having the proper player pass),
- is inspected to confirm uniform and equipment safety, and
- receives the permission of the referee to enter the field.

The first two of these responsibilities can be delegated by the referee to the benchside assistant referee (or fourth official), but permission to enter must come from the referee alone. A late-arriving player who has been permitted to enter the field during play may only enter from the halfway line on the bench side of the field.

3.4 The Substitution Process

Although the local rules of competition are allowed to modify the number of substitutes on the roster, the number of substitutions allowed throughout the match, and when a substitution is allowed, the process of conducting a substitution is given in Law 3 and should be the only method used by the referee team.

However, many referees allow less competitive matches to conduct substitutions using an abbreviated, lax process where players leave the field while substitutes are entering and where the basic requirement of receiving permission both to leave and to enter the field is given a less than precise implementation.

As experienced referees are assigned to more competitive games, they should make every effort to achieve conformity with the specific steps outlined in Law 3. Rigorous enforcement from the start of the match, combined with proactively briefing teams before the match begins, will go a long way toward ensuring cooperation from players.

If shortcuts are taken or allowed, the referee must understand that the substitution process is not considered to have officially ended until the substitute enters the field of play after having received the permission of the referee. Only at that moment does the departing player cease to be a player and become a substitute (or a substituted player) and the entering substitute cease to be a substitute and become a player.

Understanding this critical transition enables correct decisions to be made if either person engages in misconduct during the process.

3.5 Where Substitutions Occur

Under all circumstances, the substitute enters at the halfway line on the bench side of the field. The departing player is expected to leave without delay so as to allow the substitute to enter. Although many departing players will automatically start their departure by moving toward that same location, this is neither necessary nor, at times, desirable. If where the departing player starts to leave is very far away and/or is already close to a boundary line, the referee should consider requiring the departing player to exit at the closest point so as to speed up the substitution process.

The pregame discussion should include information on how other members of the officiating team are made aware of this so that the departing player can be monitored as he or she is moving outside the field back toward the bench area and so that the substitute can be given permission to enter the field once the player has exited.

3.6 Re-Entering Players

When a player is off the field under circumstances where the referee's permission is needed to re-enter, the following requirements must be met in addition to receiving the referee's permission:

Reason	Re-Entry Point	Other Conditions
Blood, bleeding, or equipment issue	Anywhere along touchline at stoppage	Pass inspection to confirm correction of problem
Injury, serious injury, any other reason for which player received permission	Anywhere along perimeter line at stoppage, anywhere along touchline during play	None

A player while departing during play by order of or with the permission of the referee commits cautionable misconduct (unsporting behavior) by interfering with or participating in any way with ongoing play.

3.7 Substitution Requests and Time-Wasting

Law 3 requires only that the referee be "informed" regarding a substitution request. The referee's involvement is thus limited generally to ensuring that the request is legal under the Law and any pertinent local rules of competition. There is no basis for denying a team's otherwise legal request to substitute unless:

- the request does not come to the referee's attention in time to suspend the restart or
- at the time of the request, the substitute is not ready to enter the field (e.g., not equipped or uniformed properly).

A referee cannot implement any personal rule against allowing substitutions before the end of either period of play or too soon after a prior substitution due to concern about wasting time. In addition to requiring that the substitute be ready to enter the field, requiring a departing player to leave at the closest point, and being prepared to restart play as quickly as possible after the substitution is over, the referee can also discourage time-wasting by reminding all parties to a substitution that it is cautionable misconduct to delay the restart of play and that Law 7 provides for taking into account time lost due to excessively delayed restarts.

Substitutions requested during the halftime break are processed in the usual manner but are held until just before the end of the break itself.

3.8 Player Eligibility

The criteria for registering players in a league and/or for determining if a player is permitted to participate in any given match are set by the competition authority and may not be modified by the referee. The competition authority may require that the referee check rosters, player passes, and similar documentation as a prerequisite for allowing a player to participate in a match. In the absence of a local competition rule specifying how a dispute regarding a player's qualifications, documentation, or right to play can be resolved prior to the start of the match, the referee should allow the person to

participate and then include all details in the match report. An example would be the case where one team claims that an opposing player has been suspended and is not eligible to play in this game, but the player's team disputes this.

If the referee can verify, based on obvious evidence, that the person and the offered documentation do not match, the person should not play. The referee may be required by local rules to retain the documentation and forward it to the competition authority with the match report. If the discrepancy or fabrication of player credentials is not obvious, the issue must be decided in favor of allowing the player to participate in the match, with full details included in the match report.

3.9 Enforcing the Minimum Number of Players

Law 3 specifies a minimum of seven players in order to start a match. However, referees should keep the following situations in mind:

- A player is included in the minimum number
 - if the player is off the field temporarily in the normal course of play.
 - if the player has been ordered off the field to correct a bleeding or blood on the uniform issue or to correct illegal equipment or is off the field at the player's request and, in the opinion of the referee the absence from the field is only temporary.
- A player cannot be included in the minimum number if the player's absence from the field is permanent (send-off for misconduct or a disabling injury). When this is determined and the resulting number of players is below the minimum, the match must be ended and full details included in the match report.

3.10 Field Player and Goalkeeper Exchanging Positions

It is permissible under the Law for a goalkeeper and a field player to change duties but only under the following conditions:

- it occurs during a stoppage of play and
- the referee is notified because permission in this case is not a requirement.

If such a change occurs but one or the other of these requirements is not met, the change is a violation and both players (the former and current goalkeeper) are cautioned at the next stoppage for unsporting behavior. However, the current goalkeeper does not commit an offense by handling the ball inside his or her penalty area because, although the change was performed illegally, the wearing of the distinctive goalkeeper shirt properly identifies the only player who may legally handle the ball inside the penalty area. Note that the shirts being worn by the two players must be consistent with their new positions.

3.11 Player-Coaches

There is nothing in the Laws of the Game which prevents a coach from playing or a player from coaching. However, where the duties of a team official (coach, assistant coach, trainer, etc.) and a player (including a substitute) are officially joined, the following guidelines must be observed:

- The name of the player-coach must either be listed in both sections of the roster or, if there is no separate team officials section, the team official title must be shown next to the name of the player-coach. Players not clearly designated as also serving as a team official may not serve in any team official capacity. Team officials not clearly designated as also serving as a player may not be allowed to enter the field as a player under any circumstances.
- When off the field and intending to act as a team official, a player-coach must change out of or wear something which covers the team shirt. Continuing to wear and have visible other parts of the player uniform (e.g., socks, cleated shoes, shorts) is permissible. A player-coach may not act as a team official while visibly wearing a team shirt.
- At all times, whether playing, off the field as a substitute or substituted player, or acting as a team official, the player-coach is under the authority of the referee and may be cautioned or sent off (and the appropriate color card displayed) for misconduct in accordance with the Laws of the Game since a player-coach is subject to the same standards of misconduct under Law 12 even if off the field and acting as a team official.
- While acting as a team official, the player-coach has the additional requirement to act in a responsible manner. However, actual dismissal from the field (if warranted) must be in accordance with Law 12. A red card must be shown and the correct reason for the send-off must be given in the match report (with all necessary supporting details).
- If a player-coach is sent off the field for any reason, whether while acting as a coach or as a player, the required automatic mandatory one game suspension applies to both roles. This means that a player-coach who has been red carded cannot be present at the team's next match in either a player or any team official capacity. The competition authority may, upon its own review, lengthen the suspension in either capacity or impose other penalties.

Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment

4.1 Wearing Uniforms

Except for the requirement that the goalkeeper wear a shirt which is distinguishable by color from every other player on either team as well as from the team officials, all uniform requirements (including colors, numbers, and player and/or team names) are set by the competition authority and must be reviewed by the referee ahead of time.

4.2 Inspection for Safety

The referee must inspect the players and their equipment to ensure that there is nothing being worn which is dangerous to themselves or any other player. The referee may delegate all or part of this responsibility to one or both of the assistant referees but final decisions regarding the illegality of the uniform or equipment rest solely with the referee.

In any inspection, particular and close attention should be paid to anything being worn which is not included in Law 4’s five player uniform elements (shirt, shorts, socks, shoes, and shinguards). To save time and because there could be last-minute adjustments of a team’s roster, it is advisable for both players and substitutes to be inspected at the same time. As with the field and the game balls, the uniform and equipment inspection is a core responsibility and must not be ignored or unduly rushed.

Although the inspection for safety described here typically occurs prior to the start of the match, all officials must be vigilant throughout the match for items which have become unsafe during play or are being used in a dangerous manner.

4.3 Uniform or Equipment Violations During Play

Equipment or uniform problems may arise during play because:

- a late-arriving player was not adequately checked
- a violation was missed prior to the match
- a player restores or creates a violation after the inspection has occurred
- play itself causes or reveals a violation

In such a situation, play is stopped only if the violation offers danger to the player, teammates, or opponents or if the violation involves misconduct. If play does not need to be stopped, inform the player of the violation and order the player to correct it while play continues. If, at the next stoppage, an inspection of the affected player determines that he or she did not or could not make the correction, the player is ordered from the field and cannot return until:

- the next stoppage of play,
- following an inspection to confirm that the problem has been corrected, and
- the referee gives permission to re-enter.

The inspection to confirm a correction can be delegated to an assistant referee or the 4th official, but the permission to re-enter belongs solely to the referee. Under certain circumstances, the willful violation by a player of the uniform or equipment requirements, particularly if the referee had previously brought a violation to the

attention of the player, could be cautionable misconduct (dissent or unsporting behavior). If play is stopped for an equipment or uniform problem that involves misconduct, play is restarted with an indirect free kick where the ball was when play was stopped.* If a player is not cautioned, the restart is a dropped ball where the ball was when play was stopped.*

4.4 Goalkeeper Uniforms and Equipment

Goalkeepers traditionally wear items of clothing besides those prescribed under Law 4. These items include soft hats or caps, gloves, pants with special hip or thigh pads, shirts with pads along the elbows and arms, and separate pads for knees or elbows. These are allowed as long as they do not present a danger to any players, are of a color distinct from the uniforms of players of either team and are, in the opinion of the referee, clearly related to the goalkeeper's function.

There is no provision for the goalkeeper or any other player to wear artificial aids to enhance their ability to play. Therefore tacky or sticky substances on the hands or gloves are illegal equipment and, if used, constitute unsporting behavior for which a caution should be given. The offending substance must be removed and the offending gloves may be replaced by others that are legal.

4.5 Displaying Messages

Players may not wear visible commercial, political, religious or personal statements on any part of the player uniform (normal manufacturer's names and logos are acceptable). Nor may they reveal such statements if they are under the uniform, whether on an undergarment or directly on the player's skin, by removing any part of the uniform. Under ordinary circumstances, only the competition authority may sanction a player who violates this rule and thus referees must include details of any violations in their match report. If the statement or message involves abusive, insulting, or offensive language or images in addition to violating this rule, the referee must deal immediately with the misconduct by sending off the player with a red card.

Note that in this case, the term "commercial" means a statement advocating the use of a product, rather than the logo of a team, league or tournament sponsor. The latter is allowed; the former is not.

4.6 Other Items of Uniform or Equipment

Players may wear an item of uniform or equipment other than those prescribed in Law 4 provided:

- it is not prohibited by the local rules of competition,
- its sole purpose is to provide physical protection,
- it does not present a danger to the wearer or any other player, and
- it has been inspected by the referee to ensure compliance with these requirements.

This is intended to refer to such things as face masks, headgear, knee and arm protectors, safety eyewear, casts, and braces.

4.7 Socks

If tape or other similar material is applied externally to a sock, it must be the same color as that part of the stocking to which it has been applied. The purpose of this restriction is to prevent the application of anything to the outside of the sock which changes its appearance (color, pattern, etc.) to interfere with the ability of the officiating team to use the sock as a means of identifying which team last made contact with the ball before it left the field. The benefit to enforcing this rule increases with the competitive level of the match.

4.8 Hair Control Devices

Although in general hair control devices are acceptable if clearly related and limited to this purpose, the referee remains responsible for making final decisions as to the safety of anything worn by a player. In making this determination regarding hair control devices (whether worn by male or female players), the following guidelines should be used:

- Hair control devices which are elastic, flexible, and soft should be allowed.
- Devices which are made of hard, sharp, edged, or breakable materials are not safe and may not be worn.
- Beads or other similar decorative devices woven into or affixed on the hair are inherently dangerous and are not allowed.

4.9 Other Player Uniform Issues

- Any item of jewelry for which a medical purpose exemption is claimed must be inspected closely and determined not to be dangerous to any player.
- If it is or might be dangerous, every effort should be made to identify what could be done to make wearing the item safe for play.
- Any solution to making the item safe must not include covering the medical information which is the sole purpose for which the item is being worn.
- While the final decision rests with the referee, medical alert jewelry normally is safe or can easily be made safe by the player.
- The wearing of any type of scarf around the neck is strictly prohibited.
- Players bound by religious law are permitted to wear such head coverings as a turban or yarmulke, provided the referee finds that the headgear does not pose a danger to any player.
- Being bound by religious law could also be extended to other clothing required of members by their religion, provided that this other clothing does not cover, obscure, or interfere with the required player uniform (e.g., totally covering the shirt, interfering with the ability of the referee or players to distinguish between the teams, or removing the uniqueness of the goalkeeper's shirt).
- Female players are currently allowed to wear headscarves provided:
 - they are the same main color as the shirt,
 - they are not attached to the shirt,
 - they have the same degree of professional appearance as the player's equipment, and
 - they do not pose a danger to any player (e.g., by having an opening/closing mechanism around the neck).

Law 5 – The Referee

5.1 Officiating Team Uniforms

All members of the referee team are expected to be in shirts which match as to color, design, and sleeve length. Socks are expected to match as to design and length. Shorts must be black and match as to leg length. Black shoes are preferred but referees can wear any color shoes so long as they are appropriate to perform the duties required of an official. Fourth officials are expected to match as to uniform as well but wearing a track suit or warm-up jacket over the uniform should be considered while performing their duties to avoid confusion with the assistant referee. With the exception of watches, officiating team members should not wear any item of jewelry which would not be permitted to a player.

Consistency in the officiating team regarding appearance of uniform items is best achieved by consulting among themselves in advance of the match so that all arrive at the field looking alike.

Conflicts between the shirt color worn by the officiating team and the shirt color of either team and/or either goalkeeper are normally resolved by the teams and/or either or both goalkeepers changing their shirt to meet the requirements of the Law. The local rules of competition should dictate which team is responsible for changing their uniforms as needed.

Hats or caps are not part of the officially accepted uniform and would not be worn at top competitive matches. Neither would glasses, tinted glasses, or sunglasses. Nothing should interfere with making eye contact between officials or with players.

5.2 The Pre-game Conference

Officials must arrive at the field with enough time available to take care of four critical responsibilities:

- Inspection of the field/goals
- Inspection of the match balls
- Inspection of player/substitute uniforms and equipment
- Holding a pre-game conference

At least 30 minutes is recommended but more may be needed at higher competitive levels. None of these responsibilities should be ignored or unduly rushed because the first three affect safety and the fourth affects the ability of the officials to work as a team. The pre-game conference provides an opportunity for all participating officials to pool their information about the teams, individual players, the season to date, and other factors potentially shaping the match. Although led by the referee, the pregame conference is most effective when all individual members of the team are actively involved in the discussion.

5.3 The Referee's Authority

All powers and duties given to the referee under Law 5 can be exercised from when the referee enters the area of the field of play until the referee leaves the area of the field of play, including all temporary suspensions of play, tie-breaking procedures, and breaks between periods of play. The referee is the sole judge of what constitutes the area of the field of play but it is normally considered to include at minimum such spaces outside the field as the team benches (technical areas), the net areas, and reasonable extensions of the field where players are practicing or warming up before the game or are in the process of gathering their belongings after the match. Note that misconduct can be committed and a card of either color can be shown at any time within this period.

Misconduct	Before the Match	After the Match
Caution – player or substitute	Counts against 2 nd caution send-off	Counts against 2 nd caution send-off
Send-off – player	Must leave, replacement by substitute on roster is allowed, team does not play down, no new person added to roster	Game over – no effect on the match just played
Send-off – substitute	Must leave, no new person added to roster, team does not play down	Game over – no effect on the match just played

Inappropriate behavior occurring after players have left the area of the field, which nevertheless parallels actions for which a card might be shown if occurring during the game, may be included in the match report but no card may be shown.

5.4 Signals

There are seven officially recognized signals authorized by FIFA and U.S. Soccer: advantage, throw-in, penalty kick, goal kick, corner kick, direct free kick, and indirect free kick. Other, less critical signals are traditional (e.g., showing time remaining in the period, approving substitute entry or player re-entry, etc.) and are fully described in U.S. Soccer's training materials. If the referee has developed a useful signal for some specialized situation (e.g., overruling an assistant referee's signal for a throw-in based on having seen a different last touch on the ball), it may be used provided it:

- does not duplicate or replace an official signal,
- is not distracting,
- is limited in purpose, and
- is thoroughly discussed in the pregame conference.

The practice of routinely using hand gestures to announce what specific foul has just been whistled is discouraged. However, referees should occasionally be prepared to quickly indicate what sort of foul has occurred when this may deter further questions, disagreements, misunderstanding, or dissent.

5.5 Doubtful or Trifling Violations

The Laws of the Game provide referees with ample authority to flexibly handle player behavior, variable field conditions, and other events during a match. One such area of flexibility is the ability to decide that a condition or event, while a violation of a Law, should be managed with minimum fuss by determining that the condition or event was doubtful or trifling. A longstanding principle of Law 5, which was removed in 1996 because it was considered so well-known as to not require a formal statement, noted that constant whistling for doubtful or trifling offenses was not good for the game and produced bad feelings from players, team officials, and spectators. In short, something could be an offense but, unless it was clear (not doubtful) and mattered (had an impact on the game), it was not necessary to stop play. The commission of an offense seemed trifling by the referee does not relieve the referee of the need to manage the situation properly. Trifling offenses, though often considered small, can aggregate into something larger and more serious. A quiet (or at times not so quiet) word may be advisable.

This is not the same as and must not be confused with the concept of advantage (see 5.6). Doubtful means that no official can say for sure exactly what happened. “Trifling” means that the players were accepting the offense and considered it not to be a threat at their skill and experience level. Any violation of the Law could theoretically be considered trifling, depending on the competitive level of the match. For example, a field lacking corner flags, although clearly in violation of Law 1, might still be considered playable (as well as safe and fair) with the result that the violation is deemed trifling in a youth recreational game. The same offense in a regional cup competition might well be considered not trifling, with the result that no game would be played on the field unless and until the problem was fixed. Likewise, a throw-in taken 2-3 yards away from the required location in the defensive third of the field might be considered trifling whereas the same offense might be whistled if committed in the attacking third.

5.6 Advantage

The effective use of advantage is the mark of a skilled, intelligent referee who is able to handle increasingly challenging matches. As with doubtful or trifling, (see 5.5), advantage is a powerful tool involving flexibility in choosing among the options available for responding to a wide range of offenses. Simply put, applying advantage means:

- recognizing and declaring that an event during play was a violation of the Law but
- play will not be stopped because doing so would benefit the team which committed the violation.

In considering a possible advantage situation, referees must keep in mind the following core elements of advantage, summarized as the 4 P's:

- Possession – either the fouled player or a teammate of the fouled player is able to retain clear possession of the ball.
- Potential – this clear possession of the ball enables the fouled team to continue an immediate and dangerous attack on the goal despite the foul. Note that this attack must not necessarily be defined only in terms of scoring a goal.

- Personnel – to assist in evaluating potential, the referee must take into account the number and skills of the defenders and attackers as play continues after the foul. If the foul enables the defending team to bring up numbers (and particularly defenders with greater skills) to challenge the attacking team, advantage should not be given.
- Proximity – attacks become in general more credible and dangerous when the location of the foul is close to the goal being attacked. Accordingly, a decision for advantage is favored the closer the team retaining possession of the ball is to the goal.

The following additional guidelines are pertinent to the advantage decision:

- The violation at the heart of an advantage decision is usually a foul directed at a specific opponent but it can include offenses which are not against any specific opponent – e.g., handling, offside, or second-touch violations.
- The advantage to be assessed is not limited to any specific player but to the entire team. In other words, the advantage decision should focus on the ability of the fouled player's team (which may include the fouled player) to continue an immediate and dangerous attack on goal.
- A critical element of the flexibility offered by the use of advantage is that the referee can come back and stop play for the original violation if the credible attack on goal does not develop as expected over the next several (2-3) seconds (including circumstances in which the ball leaves the field in favor of the opposing team or a second foul within a second or two).
- The occurrence of another violation within the ensuing several seconds presents the referee with the opportunity to consider applying advantage again or stopping play for the latest violation.
- The application of advantage must be signaled clearly and strongly so that everyone knows what decision was made.
- If cautionable misconduct accompanies a violation (such as a reckless or tactical foul), the advantage decision applies to both offenses but, even if the advantage is successful as to the foul, the referee has the duty to return to the misconduct at the first opportunity (i.e., the next stoppage, regardless of its circumstances) and delay any restart until the appropriate card or cards are displayed. If the advantage is not successful, stopping play to return to the original foul would be the next stoppage.
- Not all violations of the Law qualify for the application of advantage. For example, violations involving field, ball, or uniform requirements, or violations of a restart requirement which would require the restart to be retaken (e.g., playing the ball after a goal kick is taken but before it leaves the penalty area) would not be included.
- Giving an advantage is not a right belonging to a player or team which is the victim of a violation. It must be balanced against a number of factors only the referee can decide – not the players themselves, the team officials, or the spectators. The credibility of the attack and the ability to sustain it must be evaluated. Some factors belong solely to the referee – game control, severity of

a foul or misconduct, possibility of player retaliation, etc. – and might outweigh otherwise seemingly obvious opportunities to let play continue.

- Advantage should not be applied in cases involving actual violence for which a send-off would be given for violent conduct, serious foul play, or spitting unless there is an immediately subsequent opportunity to score a goal.
- Fouls to which advantage has successfully been applied are still included in any determination as to whether persistent infringement has been or might be committed.

Certain advantage dynamics change when the offense to which it might be applied is committed by a defender inside the defender's penalty area. They are summarized as follows:

- The advantage signal is not given.
- The objective is not to protect possession and the ability to maintain an active attack but, instead, to protect the possibility of scoring of a goal.
- If the goal is scored, the situation is resolved; if it is not scored, the original foul is called and a penalty kick results.

The advantage signal is an upswept motion of both arms to shoulder level, combined with a verbal statement of "Play on." There should be no repetitious pumping of the arms and the signal should not be maintained for any longer than necessary to ensure that the decision is known.

5.7 Stopping Play

The referee has the power to stop the match for any infringement of the Laws, to apply advantage under the appropriate conditions, or to decide that an infringement is trifling or doubtful and should not be called at all. However, the referee also has the power to stop play for any other reason, including behavior for which the referee intends only to warn the player regarding his or her conduct but not to issue a caution. In these circumstances, the referee should take care that ordering such a stoppage would not disadvantage the opposing team. As the stoppage will not have occurred for a foul or misconduct, play would be restarted with a dropped ball.

5.8 Injuries

There is no higher priority for the officiating team than the health and safety of the players. Accordingly, referees must remain vigilant in any situation where an injury might have occurred to err on the side of protecting the safety of the player. This is particularly the case where an injury may have occurred to the head or neck of a player as a result of hard contact with anyone, whether or not as a result of a foul, or of contact with any hard surface. The first action to be taken immediately is to stop play and then to bring medical assistance onto the field.

Players who are injured are required to leave the field under either of two conditions:

- the referee stops play solely for a serious injury (i.e., no other violation) or

- with play stopped for any other reason, the referee signals approval for someone (team official, medical personnel, etc.) to enter the field to assist the injured player.

There are three exceptions to this rule:

- a goalkeeper is injured,
- one or more field players (regardless of team) and a goalkeeper are seriously injured in a collision, or
- two or more players from the same team are seriously injured in a collision.

In most cases, treatment for an injury is required to be done off the field but the referee must allow treatment on the field under any of the exceptions listed above or, where an exception does not exist, if a player's injury is sufficiently serious that moving the player off the field would itself constitute a danger (usually, situations where immediate first aid must be administered).

If play has been stopped for an injury or if assistance has been waved onto the field, it is usually unwise to remain in the area of the injured player. The referee should move away and pursue other duties – consulting with one or both assistant referee about details of the event, calming other players understandably upset about the injury, checking in with the fourth official, and so forth.

5.9 Terminating a Match

The referee may terminate a match for reasons of safety, for any serious or continued infringement of the Laws, or because of interference by spectators. Only the competition authority, not the referee, has the authority to declare a winner, a forfeit, a replay of the match in part or in its entirety, or the conditions under which a replay may occur. The referee must report fully on the events.

5.10 Use of the Whistle

When the Laws of the Game provide for a signal to be given, this means the sounding of a whistle. Verbal signals are insufficient and should not be used by themselves. A whistle is required for:

- every kick-off or penalty kick
- any free kick, throw-in, corner kick, or goal kick if the referee has held up the restart for any reason – for example:
 - allow a substitution
 - evaluate an injury
 - card for misconduct
 - a decision to change the restart
 - enforce the minimum distance upon request of the team given the restart
 - consult with an assistant referee, fourth official, someone in the technical area, or a player
- stopping play due to an offense
- signaling the end of a period of play
- evacuating the field in case of weather or other dangerous condition

A whistle is recommended when the ball has left the field if the players are unaware of this and are continuing to contest for the ball. In this case, however, the purpose of the whistle is solely to gain the attention of the players. Play itself officially stopped when the ball left the field.

Since the Laws of the Game permit only one referee to be assigned to any match, with support from two assistant referees, the use of a whistle is limited to that referee. Under no circumstances may more than one official use a whistle.

5.11 Changing a Decision Regarding Goals or Misconduct

Prior to play restarting following the display of a card, the referee can revise any decision about what he or she observed on the field, re-evaluate the significance of the player action, or receive additional relevant information from another official (either or both assistant referees or the fourth official). As a result of this further reflection or assistance from other members of the officiating team, the referee can: (a) rescind the card entirely, (b) decide that the card should be given to a different player, (c) display a card to additional players, or (d) display a different color card in place of the one originally shown. Under no circumstances should the referee rescind a card as a result of a player offering an apology. Likewise, an apparent goal may be canceled entirely if, before the kick-off is taken, information is provided by a member of the officiating team that, for example, the ball did not entirely cross the goal line or was preceded by an offense by the attacking team.

Every effort by all members of the officiating team is needed to help ensure that mistakes of this nature do not occur. The referee should move carefully and deliberately after goals and before displaying a card to see if another member of the officiating team has relevant information. Once the restart occurs, goals and cards are an official part of the record of the game and must be reported. Relevant information which becomes available later must be mentioned in the game report.

5.12 Changing Other Decisions

In general, the guideline in 5.11 is also followed if the reason for stopping play is the commission of a foul or similar offense or the ball leaving the field. The referee, having stopped play for a foul by the Red team, may decide prior to the restart that the Red player's action wasn't a foul at all, was a different type of foul (indirect free kick rather than direct free kick, or penalty kick rather than direct free kick), or was committed in a sequence of offenses which actually started with a player from the opposing team. Situations of this sort normally involve simply restating the reason for the stoppage along with any change in the official signal consistent with the change in decision. Likewise, announcing a throw-in for one team can be easily changed to a throw-in for the opposing team.

If the referee changes the restart, it is appropriate to make sure both teams have adjusted and are ready for the new restart before the signal is given to restart play.

5.13 Match Reports and Misconduct

Although all aspects of the referee's match report must meet high standards of clarity, accuracy, brevity, and pertinence, those sections involving misconduct require special attention, and reporting on acts of misconduct leading to a send-off merit the highest concern. In order for disciplinary committees to evaluate serious misconduct, match reports must start with:

- the name of (and additional identifying information for) the player who was sent off.
- the time of the send-off, and
- the specific reason in the Laws of the Game for the send-off (Law 12).

In addition, however, the referee must supply sufficient detail regarding the circumstances of the misconduct to aid in evaluating its level of seriousness. Among the factors that should be addressed, where relevant, are:

- Whether the action occurred during a challenge for the ball.
- Whether the misconduct occurred at a stoppage of play or during play.
- If anyone was injured as a consequence of the misconduct.
- Whether there was any prior incident that may have led to the player's actions.
- The demeanor of the player during the send-off (including any difficulties in implementing the player's removal from the field).
- The location of the action in relation to the goal line and penalty area being attacked at the time.
- The subsequent intrusion of any other players (teammates or opponents).during the time the referee is managing the send-off.
- The specific words or gestures which were determined to be insulting, offensive, or abusive.
- The identity of the opponent or official toward whom the misconduct was directed.
- A summary of the prior misconduct (or a reference to the section of the report which detailed the prior caution) preceding the second caution for which the player was sent off.
- The identity of the assistant referee, fourth official, or reserve assistant referee who provided independently observed facts to the referee regarding the misconduct.
- All other details of the action which materially shaped the decision to send the player off.

Match reports provided independently by assistant referees or fourth officials should follow these guidelines as well.

When a player commits more than one form of misconduct at the same time (e.g., dissent and abusive language, denial of an obvious goal scoring opportunity and serious foul play, delaying the restart of play and failure to respect the required distance), the referee can use only one as the official reason for the caution or send off. The reason given should reflect whichever act of misconduct is considered the most

serious. However, all misconduct committed by a player must be noted in the referee's report, including any behavior in addition to the official reason for the caution or send off.

5.14 Behavior of Team Officials

Coaches or other team officials, one at a time, may provide tactical advice to their players, including positive remarks and encouragement. The referee should only take action against coaches or other team officials for irresponsible behavior, including actions which show a lack of respect for the history and traditions of the sport or that adversely affect the safety, equality, and enjoyment of the players.

A coach or other team official may not be cautioned or sent off with the exception of player-coaches (see 3.11). However, at the discretion of the referee, team officials may be warned regarding their behavior or dismissed from the field of play and its immediate area. The referee is the sole judge of what constitutes the immediate area. When a coach or other team official is dismissed, the referee must include detailed information about such incidents in the match report. U.S. Soccer has developed a recommended approach to deal with inappropriate behavior of team officials called "Ask, Tell, Dismiss." Referees should study this approach and discuss its elements in the pregame meeting to ensure effective involvement by all members of the official's team.

5.15 Follow Local Rules of Competition

Where a local rule of competition conflicts with the Laws of the Game, referees should follow the local rule except where the local rule significantly erodes or restricts the ability of the referee to protect the safety of players. If a local rule is distasteful to a referee or is contrary to the referee's best judgment, assignment to a match using such a rule should be declined. Some rules of competition, for example, might call for a card to be shown to a team official despite the clear mandate of the Law (see 5.14). If assignment to a match controlled by such a rule is accepted, the referee must make every effort to implement the rule to the best of his or her ability.

5.16 Misconduct by Substitutes

The Laws of the Game specify only three reasons that may be given for cautioning a substitute: unsporting behavior, dissent, or delaying the restart of play. Supported by appropriate detail, only one of these three reasons should be used in a match report. Although the Laws of the Game allow any of the seven send-off offenses to be used for a substitute's misconduct, U.S. Soccer recommends that serious foul play not be used – if the substitute's action involves violence of any sort, use violent conduct as the reason.

5.17 Misconduct During the Match

Aside from issues of advantage (see 5.6), misconduct must be dealt with no later than the next stoppage of play following the misconduct. If advantage is not applied, the next stoppage would be for the foul or foul/misconduct itself. The end of a period of play also qualifies as the next stoppage if it directly follows the misconduct. With two exceptions, any card (yellow or red) based on misconduct must be shown at the next stoppage or it cannot be shown at all. In practice, this means that the restart for the next stoppage

(except, of course, for the end of the last period of play) must be delayed by the referee (that is, treated as a ceremonial restart) in order for any misconduct to be dealt with. Misconduct occurring during a stoppage must be dealt with at that stoppage.

The two exceptions are:

- If a second caution has been given to the same person in the game (either as a player or as a substitute) but the red card for having received two cautions was overlooked, the red card can be shown whenever the matter is brought to the attention of the referee, either by realizing the error himself or herself or by advice from a member of the officiating team. Any actions by this player between the second caution and the delayed send-off are not affected by the delay – except that a goal scored by this player will be canceled if the delayed send-off occurs during the stoppage immediately following the goal.
- The referee may send off a player for any serious offense which was signaled by the assistant referee even if this signal was not immediately seen and one or more stoppages occurred between the assistant referee's signal and the referee becoming aware of the problem. This exception can be used only if it meets the following requirements:
 - The offense involves violence – normally defined as serious foul play, violent conduct, or spitting.
 - The assistant referee maintained the appropriate signal during the entire time between the player's behavior and the referee becoming aware of the signal.

If the referee only becomes aware of the signal at a stoppage, the restart (after the send-off) would be based on what caused the stoppage. If the referee stopped play solely based on this signal, the restart (after the send-off) would be a dropped ball where the ball was when play was stopped.* Given the precise requirements for this exception, referees are urged to include a reminder of this guideline in the pregame discussion to avoid inadvertently losing the opportunity to use it.

5.18 Sending Off a Player

Referees must keep in mind the following guidelines regarding the disposition of a player who has been sent off ("player" in this section includes a substitute as well):

- The purpose of sending off a player is to ensure that this person no longer takes any further part in the match.
- Leaving the field is generally interpreted as meaning the area of the field and is therefore not limited to its formal boundaries (touch lines and goal lines). Accordingly, technical areas and team benches are to be considered within the area of the field.
- Players who are sent off are expected to have no further contact or involvement with their team.
- The local rules of competition may define, for any given facility or match location, where players who are sent off are required to go. To the extent such rules are not inconsistent with these principles, they should be followed. In the absence of

a pertinent rule of competition, the referee is the sole judge of the “area of play” from which the person sent off is to be excluded.

The referee, with the assistance of the fourth official and the assistant referees, is encouraged to enlist the aid of the competition authority (e.g., a field marshal), facility manager, or on-site security staff to enforce these requirements. A player under the age of 18 who is sent off for misconduct is also required to leave the field but only with appropriate supervision. If there is no adult supervision available to accompany a player under the age of 18 or if this requirement would result in the team being unsupervised, the referee may allow the player to remain on his or her team’s bench (or equivalent) provided:

- the player’s team shirt is removed or covered up,
- the player remains seated, and silent through the remainder of the match

The failure of the player to meet these requirements could lead to termination of the match at the discretion of the referee.

5.19 Extra Persons on the Field

All references in the table below to a goal being scored and whether the goal counts or not presume that the “extra person” (no matter who it is) has not interfered with play or the players prior to the goal being scored. Any actual interference takes precedence over a goal being scored and the table directs the action to be taken in such a case.

If a player enters or re-enters the field without the permission of the referee during play¹:

Further Action by the Player²	Referee’s Response
Does not interfere with play/players	No need to stop play until actual interference occurs or play stops for some other reason
Interferes with play/players but does not commit any other violation of the Law	Stop play, caution for entering (E), restart with IFK for opposing team at ball location*
Interference with play/players involves a foul under Law 12	Stop play for the foul, caution for entering (E), display any other card depending on the additional foul/misconduct, restart with IFK, DFK, or PK depending on the violation of the Law
Goal is scored against opposing team and discovered before restart	Cancel goal, caution for entering (E), restart with GK
Goal is scored against own team and discovered before restart	Goal is counted, caution for entering (E), restart with KO by own team

¹ Assumes the departure from the field was not in the normal course of play. A player may be off the field with the permission or at the direction of the referee, in which case the referee’s permission is needed to re-enter.

² “Player” includes any rostered player (i.e., someone designated as a “starter”) who arrives after the match begins and enters the field without the permission of the referee.

If a substitute enters the field without the permission of the referee during play¹:

Further Action by the Substitute²	Referee's Response
Does not interfere with play/players	No need to stop play until actual interference occurs or play stops for some other reason, caution for unsporting behavior (UB)
Interferes with play/players but does not commit any other violation of the Law	Stop play, caution for unsporting behavior (UB), restart with IFK for opposing team at ball location
Interference with play/players involves an action which constitutes misconduct ³	Stop play for the misconduct, caution for unsporting behavior (UB), display any other card depending on the additional misconduct, restart with IFK for opposing team at ball location
Goal is scored against opposing team and discovered before restart	Cancel goal, caution for unsporting behavior (UB), restart with IFK for opposing team at ball location
Goal is scored against own team and discovered before restart	Goal is counted, caution for entering (E), restart with KO by own team

¹A substitute must always have the permission of the referee to enter the field whether during play or during a stoppage.

²"Substitute" includes "substituted player."

³A substitute cannot commit a foul under any circumstances, only misconduct.

If a team official¹ enters the field without the permission of the referee during play:

While Team Official Is on the Field	Referee's Response
Does not interfere with play/players	No need to stop play until actual interference occurs or play stops for some other reason
Interferes with play/players ²	Stop play, order the team official off the field, including possible dismissal for behaving irresponsibly, restart with DB at ball location*
A goal is scored against the team official's team and discovered before restart	Goal is counted, order the team official off the field (including possible dismissal for behaving irresponsibly), restart with KO
A goal is scored against the opposing team	Cancel goal, order the team official off the field (including possible dismissal for behaving irresponsibly), restart with a GK

¹"Team official" includes anyone allowed by the referee to be in the technical area.

²Special rules apply if play is being restarted by a PK/KFTM and the interference occurs after the ball is kicked but before/after it makes contact with the goalkeeper, crossbar, or goal post.

If a spectator¹ enters the field without the permission of the referee during play:

While the Spectator Is on the Field	Referee's Response
Does not interfere with play/players	No need to stop play until actual interference occurs or play stops for some other reason
Interferes with play/players ²	Stop play, order the spectator off the field, restart with DB at ball location*
A goal is scored regardless of team and discovered before the restart	Cancel goal, order the spectator off the field, restart with DB at ball location*

¹Spectator includes any person (other than a player, substitute, or team official), animal or object.

²Special rules apply if play is being restarted by a PK/KFTM and the interference occurs after the ball is kicked but before/after it makes contact with the goalkeeper, crossbar, or goal post.

In all cases where a goal is scored with an extra person on the field but the extra person's presence is not discovered until after the kick-off restart, the goal must be counted regardless of who the extra person is or which team scored. Of course, once discovered, the referee must deal with the extra person according to the Law and must include full details in the match report.

5.20 Water

Players who wish to drink water while play continues may do so only from the touch line and without leaving the field. Players may also drink water during stoppages at any of the boundary lines. If water containers are left along boundary lines outside the field, they must not interfere with the movement of the assistant referee or block his or her view of the length of the touch line. Under no circumstances may water containers of any sort be thrown onto the field, either during play or at stoppages (including the halftime break), nor may they be thrown from the field after a player has finished drinking.

5.21 Objects Thrown onto the Field

The referee must take special care in dealing with objects thrown onto the field during a match. In many cases (such as confetti or other paper products), this is harmless celebration and can be ignored. Other objects, such as bottles, sharp objects, or lighted fireworks, are inherently dangerous for players, officials, or persons in the technical areas and play must be stopped as quickly as possible: a decision may be needed as to whether the match must be terminated or if play may be safely resumed. The objects must be removed and steps taken to prevent any further occurrence. Falling into a gray area are situations in which what is thrown onto the field may not be dangerous per se but carries the potential of interfering unfairly with play. In deciding what action to take, the referee should consider: (a) whether the foreign objects are sufficiently numerous to make the playing surface unsafe if stepped on, (b) whether the foreign object will cause confusion on the part of players (e.g., another ball or similar object such as a balloon),

and (c) whether the potentially unsafe or unfair conditions are limited to one end of the field and hence might disadvantage one team over another.

5.22 Behavior in the Technical Area

The celebration of a goal is an expected, natural, and entirely acceptable part of the excitement of the game. However, celebrations must be kept within reasonable bounds and the participation of persons in the technical area is more restricted than it is for players.

- All persons in the technical area are required to remain in the technical area, just as they are during play.
- They must not allow their exuberance to include such actions as overturning benches, pounding on boards, hitting canopies, or throwing anything onto the field.
- While substitutes and team officials may certainly jump up in celebration, they must limit their action to the area in front of their bench.
- Understanding the excitement of the team which has just scored a goal, referees must use common sense in enforcing these restrictions. Fourth officials and the near assistant referee should monitor this behavior and use persuasion as much as possible to ensure that celebrations involving persons in the technical area remain within proper bounds.

It is well-established that no person from the technical area, including the trainer (or any other person who is present to provide medical assistance), is allowed to enter the field unless and until beckoned by the referee. Equally, however, the trainer must remain in the technical area until permission is given to enter the field.

- The trainer may, of course, move within the technical area to be closer to the injured player if and when permission is given to enter the field.
- The failure of the trainer to respect this restriction may be grounds for dismissal from the field by the referee.
- While waiting to be beckoned onto the field, while entering the field, and while providing medical assistance, the trainer may not direct comments to any official other than confirming (if necessary) that permission has been given.
- In the case of a player who has received permission from the referee to exit the field during play for the purpose of receiving medical assistance off the field, the trainer must wait for permission to leave the technical area and may go to the player's location off the field provided that at no time may the trainer enter the field and, upon arriving at the player's location, both the player and the trainer must move far enough back from the touch or goal line to not interfere with play or with the view of the assistant referee.
 - However, in this case only (i.e., the trainer is providing assistance to a player off the field), permission may also be granted by the fourth official or by the near assistant referee.
 - The trainer must not delay returning to the technical area as soon as medical assistance has been provided.

- The fourth official or the assistant referee should as quickly as is practical notify the referee if a trainer or similar person leaves the technical area without receiving the necessary permission.

5.23 Mass Confrontation

For the purpose of this guidance, a mass confrontation is defined as the concerted actions of three or more players from the same team who are disputing a decision while surrounding the referee or hindering or forcing movement by the referee. Such situations bring the game into disrepute, are inherently intimidating, and create a strongly negative public image.

The Laws of the Game provide adequate tools to deal with dissent on an individual level, but mass confrontations add a dangerous element calling for special measures involving all members of the officiating team. Instances of mass confrontation are significant events that transcend the sum of the individual acts of misconduct which the referee must handle.

Referee

- Attempt to assess the likelihood of a mass confrontation and move out of the area where it would probably occur.
- Distinguish between those players who are actively and aggressively increasing the tension and those who, though physically nearby, are clearly trying to reduce tension.
- Pay particular attention to those who instigate the confrontation, those who join it from the immediate area, and those who move a considerable distance in order to participate in the confrontation.
- Consult with the assistant referees and the fourth official before taking disciplinary action. Assess the appropriate punitive measures individually and, if a player is to be sent off, ensure that this occurs before moving on to other players who are to be disciplined.
- Ensure that all cards for misconduct are displayed and recorded before play is restarted.

Assistant Referees

- Both assistants move along the touchline to a point as near as possible to the confrontation and, if necessary, prepare to enter the field for a better viewing position.
- The nearer assistant should concentrate fully on the confrontation and attempt to identify the instigator(s) while the farther assistant concentrates on players who join the confrontation from a distance.
- The senior assistant (on the bench side of the field) should additionally monitor persons coming from the bench into the field to participate in the confrontation, but this assistant's primary objective remains monitoring the confrontation itself.
- After the confrontation has ended, both assistants should be ready to provide information to the referee regarding the identities of persons they observed and the role each such person played in the confrontation.

Fourth Official

- The fourth official assists the referee at all times.
- The fourth official's primary task in a mass confrontation situation is to observe and record the behavior of persons (substitutes and team officials) in the technical areas.
- After the confrontation has ended, the fourth official should be ready to provide information to the referee regarding the behavior of persons whom he has observed. If any relevant behavior involved violence and was not observed by either the referee or the assistant referees, the fourth official must be ready to include such observations in his report.

The referee's game report must list and describe separately any instances of mass confrontation in addition to the actions the referee took to handle individual misconduct that may have been part of the confrontation. Individual misconduct is clearly the responsibility of the referee and must be handled during the match in accordance with standard procedures.

Competition authorities reserve the right to administer supplementary discipline to players involved in mass confrontations who may have escaped the attention of the officiating team. Officials should not rely on the right of any competition authority in this regard but instead make every effort to properly administer justice for misconduct at the time it occurs.

5.24 Dealing with Severe Weather

Since the average distance between successive lightning flashes in many parts of the country is approximately 2-3 miles, any time lightning can be seen or thunder heard, it is likely that the danger is already present.

Know the requirements for weather issues set by the owner of the field and/or the local rules of competition as they are usually based on the specific characteristics of the geography and weather patterns associated with their matches. In the absence of any such rules, the commonly accepted guideline is known as the "30-30" approach.

To measure the first 30, count the seconds between seeing lightning and hearing thunder. If the time is 30 seconds or less, there is imminent danger. Play should be stopped immediately, the field cleared, and everyone (including officials) urged to find proper shelter. If no lightning flashes are seen, loud thunder should be sufficient to take these steps.

Having stopped play, the second 30 is the measurement of the number of minutes during which no lightning flash is seen. Any lightning flash before the expiration of 30 minutes resets the time to 0 and the process is restarted. Any subsequent lightning flash requires returning to the start of the "30-30" approach.

The application of any local rule of competition, field-specific rule, or the "30-30" formula establishes only the minimum standards needed to protect all participants from the

danger of serious weather. The referee has the authority to stop play and take all necessary steps on behalf of the safety of players even before these minimum standards are met. These options should be discussed in the pregame conference so that all members of the officiating team are aware of their role. Additionally, it is recommended that the referee consult with the officials of both teams to determine if anyone possesses communication and/or instrumentation which support the awareness of developing weather conditions.

Where weather conditions other than lightning may be involved (e.g., tornados, hail, heavy rain), err on the side of safety by heeding a declared “watch” and the even more imminent danger represented by a “warning.”

Any resumption of play is solely at the discretion of the referee but the referee should consult with competition authorities or team officials to take into account the availability of natural or artificial light, travel needs, and other factors that might make restarting the match inadvisable.

Once the game is suspended, the responsibility for the players shifts to the team officials and adult spectators who must determine what shelter to use.

Law 6 – The Assistant Referees

6.1 Signaling for Offenses Seen by the Referee

Assistant referees should not signal for an offense they see if they have every reason to believe the referee has also seen the offense. They should, however, signal to confirm the referee's decision after the referee has clearly acted. Assistant referees should focus instead on those actions which:

- the referee has not or could not see, and
- the assistant referee believes the referee would have stopped play for the offense if he or she had seen it

6.2 Referee Does Not See Signal by Assistant Referee

Ordinarily, the mutually supportive standard practices of regularly making eye contact with each assistant referee, and each assistant referee mirroring a signal by the other assistant referee if the latter signal is being given behind the referee's back usually work to prevent most situations where the referee misses an assistant referee's signal.

Where this is not the case, the following guidelines should be used for the indicated scenarios:

- Offside – the assistant referee should stand at attention with the flag raised until the defending team gains clear possession or until a goal kick or throw-in is awarded to the defending team.
- Ball leaves the field – if the referee does not see the signal for an extended period, during which play is stopped and restarted several times, the assistant referee should lower the flag. The FIFA Referee Committee has declared that it is impossible for the referee to act on the assistant referee's signal after so much play.
- Substitution – the assistant should drop the flag as soon as play restarts and, if possible, advise the requesting team to wait for the next opportunity.
- Offense involving violence – see 5.17.
- Offense not involving violence – follow the referee's preferences given in the pregame discussion. However, if the foul or misconduct warrants a response by the referee other than stopping play, the assistant referee could call for a brief meeting with the referee at the next stoppage, thus preserving the referee's ability to give a card if needed.

6.3 Use of Club Linesmen

Where one or both assistant referees are not available (not assigned or not present), the referee may use club linesmen. Once the club linesmen are identified, the referee should take a moment with them before the start of the game to clarify their duties. The referee should make it clear that the decisions of the referee are final and must not be questioned. The relationship of club linesmen to the referee must be one of assistance, without undue interference or any opposition. Club linesmen are to signal only when the ball is entirely over the goal line or touch line. The referee must be aware of and follow any local rules of competition that provide for alternative methods of assisting the referee in the absence of one or both assistant referees.

6.4 Replacing the Referee

The local rules of competition may provide a specific instruction for who would replace a referee who is unable to continue. If not, a referee who is unable to continue is replaced by the fourth official if one has been appointed, or by the more experienced assistant referee if no fourth official has been appointed. Where the situation remains unclear despite these alternatives, the decision will be made by the referee.

6.5 Responsibility for Offside

Assistant referees must be properly positioned, focused, and attentive at all times so as to fulfill their obligation to assist the referee with this critical decision. If the assistant referee, properly positioned and attentive, is in doubt as to whether an offside position or involvement in active play exists, no offside signal should be given.

At times, the assistant referee may feel pressured to divide his or her attention where activities involving different duties under Law 6 are occurring simultaneously. The responsibility for providing timely and accurate assistance with offside has the highest priority for the assistant referee because offside decisions are almost always game critical whether made correctly or incorrectly. Referees should include in their pregame discussion how assistant referee duties other than offside assistance can be covered when offside assistance is being given priority.

6.6 Confirming Restart Decisions by the Referee

The referee retains primary responsibility for announcing decisions regarding the throw-in, goal kick, and corner kick restarts when the ball leaves the field across the portion of the touchline or goal line not given to the assistant referee. However, the assistant referee should also provide a confirming flag signal after the referee has clearly signaled the restart decision.

6.7 Assisting with Enforcing the Minimum Distance

In accordance with Law 6, assistant referees can assist the referee with enforcing the minimum distance required on a free kick when indicated by the referee. In general, the assistant referee should follow the same guidelines as outlined for the referee when performing this function (see 13.1). However, only the referee can signal when the kick is to occur or to deal with any misconduct which interferes with or delays the taking of the kick.

The referee should include in the pregame discussion any specific instructions that the assistant referee should follow. For example, the assistant referee should not enter the field or become involved in enforcing the minimum distance unless directed to do so by the referee. There should also be a clear signal by the assistant referee to indicate to the referee when the enforcement of the minimum distance has been completed with the assistant referee back in position and ready for the next phase of play.

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

7.1 Length of the Half

The length of a half is set by Laws of the Game, unless modified by the competition authority for younger player or tournament conditions. The referee is not authorized under any circumstances to shorten the length of the half once the game begins. Prior to the match, the teams may agree to play with each half shortened by the same amount of time and, in this case, the referee must include the details in the match report.

7.2 Added Time

Law 7 provides that the referee may make allowance for time lost due to a list of events. However, the amount of the time determined to be lost is solely at the discretion of the referee and should be estimated based on excessive delays in restarting play.

As a matter of recommended procedure, within the last minute of regulation time for each half or additional period of play, the referee should notify the fourth official or, if one has not been appointed, the bench side assistant referee of any time added to the period of play: this information may then be conveyed to each team. If a fourth official has been appointed and is using an information board, any extra time will be displayed at the end of the period of play. The time added is the minimum length by which the period of play will be extended. A further extension of time may be needed if, during the originally announced extension, additional time is lost.

7.3 Mistaken Ending

If the referee ends play early, then the teams must be called back onto the field and the remaining time must be played as soon as the error is detected. The halftime break is not considered to have begun until the first period of play is properly ended. If the ball was out of play when the period was ended incorrectly, then play is restarted in accordance with the Laws of the Game. If the ball was in play, then the correct restart is a dropped ball where the ball was when the referee incorrectly ended play.* If a period of play is ended early but this is not discovered until the next period of play has started, the game will proceed normally thereafter and full details must be included in the match report.

7.4 Status of Match Which Has Ended Prematurely

If a match ends before the full allotted playing time expires, all details must be included in the match report. Any determination as to the status of such a match belongs solely to the competition authority and referees are advised to direct all questions to that organization.

Law 8 – The Start of Play

8.1 The Kick-Off

If the competition authority, for ceremonial reasons, wishes to have someone other than a player perform a kick-off to start a match, the ball must not be played further but retrieved and held for the kick-off required by Law 8 as soon as all ceremonial events have ended and the field is cleared of persons other than players and officials.

8.2 The Start of Play

Before starting a period of play, the assistant referees should indicate to the referee that the requirements for starting play are met at their respective ends of the field: the correct number of players, a properly uniformed goalkeeper, and the absence of any outside agent. Calling out to captains or goalkeepers to see if they are ready is never necessary nor recommended even if the referee is acting alone or with only club linesmen.

8.3 Dropped Ball for Inadvertent Whistle

If the referee mistakenly blows the whistle to stop play, the proper restart is a dropped ball at the place where the ball was when the whistle was blown.*

8.4 Dropped Ball Restart

There is no requirement that players from each team, any player, or the same number of players must participate in a dropped ball restart. The goalkeeper may participate in a dropped ball restart. If the referee stops play because two players have simultaneously committed fouls against each other, the correct restart in this limited and rare event should be a dropped ball where the ball was when play was stopped.*

Referees should take care not to use this option as a means of avoiding a difficult but necessary decision as to which player committed an offense first and which player retaliated. The referee must not use the dropped ball to restart play as a crutch in those cases where there is some question about the correct restart. The referee must make a decision and announce it firmly.

8.5 Dropped Ball Mechanics

A dropped ball must be dropped, not thrown down. The referee should hold the ball in the palm of the hand at waist level, with the other hand on top of the ball. At the proper moment, the referee should then pull away the hand beneath the ball and let it drop, taking care that the players do not play it until it has hit the ground. If the dropped ball leaves the field without having been played, the ball must be dropped again where it was previously dropped.

8.6 No Goal Directly from a Dropped Ball

If the first touch of the ball is followed directly by the ball entering the goal, the score cannot be counted. Play must be restarted by either a goal kick, if kicked directly into the opposing team's goal, or a corner kick, if kicked directly into the player's own goal.

Law 9 – Ball In and Out of Play

9.1 Stopping Play

While it is the signal of the referee that announces a decision, play is considered to have stopped when the decision is made, not when the decision is announced. Thus, no act can be considered a foul if it occurs after the referee has decided to stop play but before the signal has actually been given. The referee is the sole judge of when he or she has decided to stop play. If the referee is acting on a signal from an assistant referee, the stoppage is considered to have occurred at the time of the assistant referee's signal.

9.2 Apparent Simultaneous Touches

The referee should promptly signal a clear decision on the direction for the restart when the ball appears to have gone off the field from simultaneous touches by members of both teams. Under the Laws of the Game, it is not acceptable to give a dropped ball restart in situations where the referee cannot initially decide which team has possession.

Law 10 – Method of Scoring

10.1 Goal Scored

In addition to the formal requirements of Law 10, the following are also required for a goal:

- The referee must not have whistled for a supposed offense by either team before the ball entered the goal.
- The referee must not have decided that time for the half or any additional period of play is over before the ball entered the goal.
- An outside agent must not have interfered with play or players inside the field before the ball entered the goal.
- Counting the goal is not prevented by the requirements of the restart which directly preceded the goal.

10.2 Goal Not Canceled

None of the following events will cause a goal to be canceled if it meets all the requirements in 10.1:

- The ball deflects off the referee or any assistant referee on the field before entering the goal.
- An outside agent enters the field but does not interfere with play or players.
- A defender commits an offense, regardless of intent, which fails to prevent the ball from entering the goal.
- The goal is scored by a defender, sometimes referred to as an own goal.

10.3 Goal Canceled

If an apparent goal is scored but must be canceled due to a restart requirement or other requirement of the Law, the ball has nevertheless left the field across the goal line and play must therefore be restarted based on this fact. If the apparent goal was the direct result of a defender's action, the restart is a corner kick; if directly by an attacker's action, the restart is a goal kick.

Law 11 – Offside

11.1 Even or Nearer

In a fast moving game, the decision as to whether an attacker is in an offside position at the moment the ball is touched or played by a teammate often hinges on a close decision on whether the attacker is ahead of the second to last defender, the ball, and the halfway line. Determining if an attacker has been ahead of an opponent has been subject to various informal interpretations over the years but the only correct definition focuses on those parts of the attacker's body which can legally play the ball (head, torso, legs/feet). If any of these parts are closer to the opposing team's goal line than the second to last defender, the ball, and the halfway line, then the attacker is in an offside position.

Note that the last defender and the second to last defender might be even with each other, in which case the attacker must be ahead of both defenders to meet the offside position definition.

11.2 Certainty Is Needed

If either the assistant referee or the referee is not certain that an attacker is in an offside position or is not certain that an attacker in an offside position is involved in active play, then the offside offense should not be called.

11.3 Reacting to the Flag

Referees must always be aware of but not react immediately or without thought to an offside flag signal from the assistant referee. A raised flag for offside is an indication that the assistant referee has seen an attacker in an offside position who is believed to be involved in active play from the assistant referee's perspective. The assistant referee's position provides a superior standpoint from which to judge offside position but the actual offense must be subject to the decision of the referee whose position often provides a more advantageous view of involvement.

The farther away the involvement in active play is from the assistant referee, the more important it is for the referee to build on the assistant referee's signal by making an independent assessment of involvement. Where events seen from the referee's position do not support a decision for involvement, the referee must not hesitate to wave down the assistant referee's signal. It should be rare, but fully within the referee's authority, for the referee to whistle an offside offense in the absence of a signal from the assistant referee.

11.4 Location of the Restart for an Offside Offense

Offside is punished where the infringement occurred. In other words, the indirect free kick is taken from the place where the offside position attacker was when the teammate played the ball.

If the offside offense was committed by an attacker who was off the field in the normal course of play at the time his or her teammate last touched/played the ball and who

then re-entered the field before becoming involved in active play, then the restart would be located where the attacker re-entered the field. An attacker who is off the field of play under circumstances that require the player to receive the permission of the referee to re-enter may still be considered in an offside position if he or she meets all the requirements set by Law 11. If that attacker then re-enters the field without the referee's permission and commits an offside offense by becoming involved in active play, the restart is nevertheless determined by the attacker's illegal re-entry – an indirect free kick where the ball was when play was stopped.* The illegal re-entry, of course, is cautionable misconduct.

11.5 Applying Advantage to an Offside Offense

Advantage may be applied to an offside offense, but without the usual advantage signal if, despite the violation of Law 11, the ball either:

- directly leaves the field for a restart which is favorable to the defense, or
- is taken under clear and uncontested control by the defending team which then launches its own attack in return.

As with other applications of advantage, the referee should return to the original offside violation if the expected advantage does not materialize.

11.6 Effect on Offside Position of Defender Leaving the Field

If a defender moves beyond his or her own goal line or across a touch line in an attempt to place an opponent in an offside position, the referee should not stop play immediately to caution the defending player, but should allow play to continue. The attacker is not in an offside position because the defender is treated as though he or she were still on the field of play at his or her point of exit. Since this departure from the field is not in the normal course of play, the referee should caution the defending player at the next stoppage for leaving the field without the referee's permission.

A defender who leaves the field during the course of play and does not or is not able to immediately return must still be considered in determining where the second to last defender is for the purpose of judging if any attacker is in an offside position. Such a defender is considered to be on the touchline or goal line at the point where the defender left the field. A defender who leaves the field with the referee's permission or at the referee's direction is not taken into account in determining an offside position.

11.7 Becoming Onside

The status of being in an onside or an offside position is determined at the moment the ball is last touched/played by a teammate and continues until one of the following events occurs:

- a teammate again touches or plays the ball,
- a defender plays (possesses and controls, not simply deflects) the ball, or
- the ball goes out of play.

In the case of a new touch/play of the ball by a teammate, the result of such a re-evaluation, of course, may be that the player still meets all the requirements of Law 11

for being in an offside position. Any one of the three occurrences listed above can change the offside or onside position status of an attacker.

11.8 Not Interfering with Play

An attacker in an offside position should not be judged as interfering with play if he or she successfully moves to avoid contact with the ball. If an attacker in an offside position and another attacker in an onside position are each moving toward the ball, the determination of interfering with play cannot be made until one of them makes contact with the ball – only if that contact is made by the attacker coming from an offside position can an offside offense be given.

11.9 Interfering with an Opponent as Involvement in Active Play

Interfering with an opponent consists of clearly blocking an opponent's line of vision (this applies mostly to goalkeepers) or challenging an opponent for the ball. The concept of challenging an opponent for the ball includes physical proximity to the opponent while the ball is within playing distance. In other words, contesting for the ball must be actual, not theoretical.

Physical proximity can mean actual contact or being close enough to prevent or interfere with the opponent's ability to play the ball. In this regard, an attacker in an offside position merely running toward the ball is not by this behavior alone challenging for the ball unless, in addition, the movement to the ball involves either contact with the opponent or interference with the movement of that opponent to play the ball.

Note that playing distance is not defined by any specific distance but should be determined by the ability of the players and consistent with the game's competitive level.

11.10 Gaining an Advantage as Involvement in Active Play

Gaining an advantage occurs when there is initially neither interference with play nor with an opponent but, following contact by the ball with some part of the goal frame, the referee, or a defender, including the goalkeeper, an attacker who was in an offside position when the play began becomes actively involved in play.

In general, if the contact is with the goal frame or the referee, there is an offside violation because these objects are a part of the field and the attacker's offside position is not affected. The situation is more complicated when the ball contacts any defender, including the goalkeeper, because in this case the referee must decide if that contact was a deliberate save, a rebound, or a deflection. In these cases, there is an offside violation because these types of defender contacts also do not cancel the attacker's offside position.

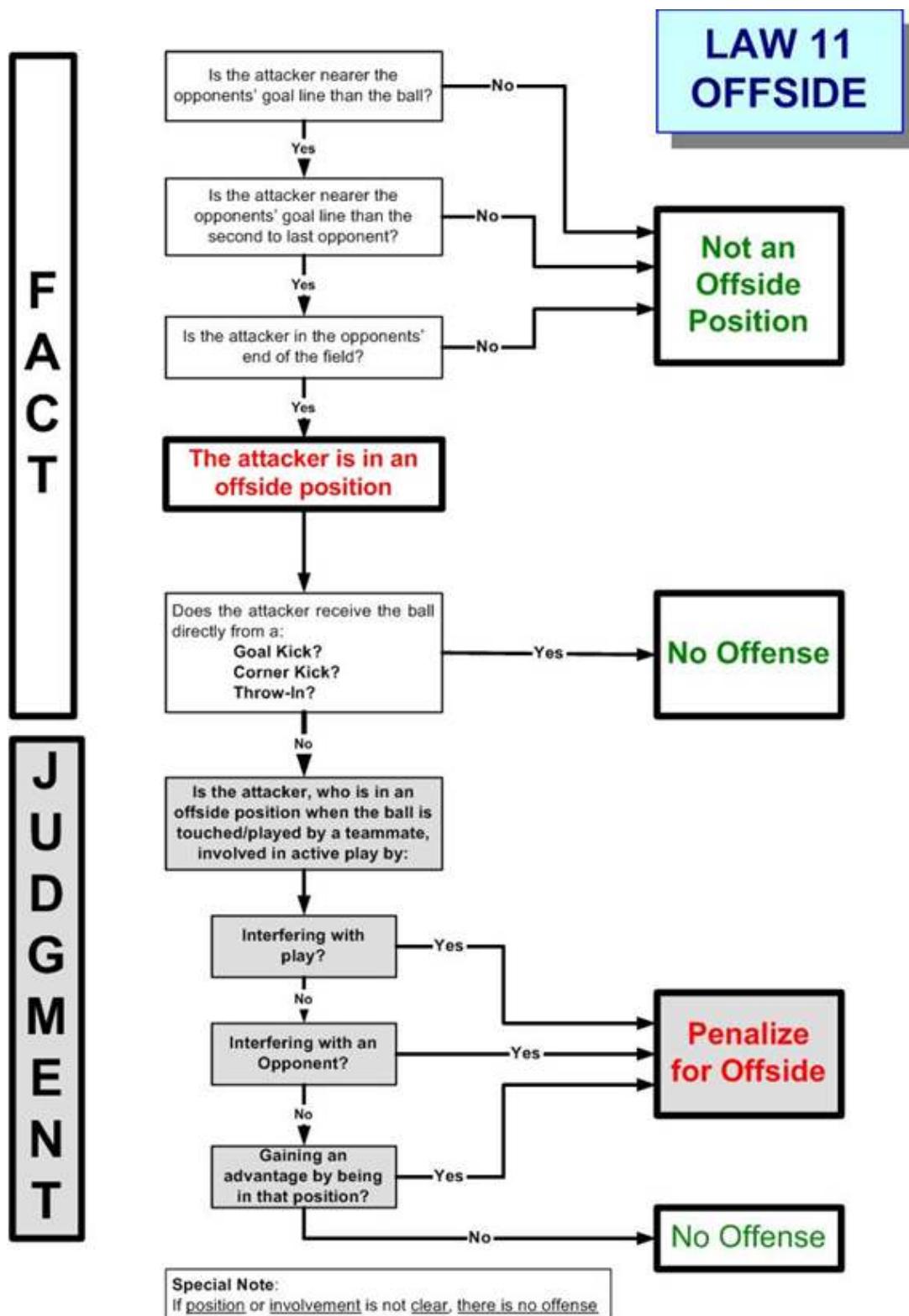
Rebounds and deflections are uncontrolled, instinctive, and accidental redirections of the ball. The defender can be standing still or in motion but not in either case for the purpose of playing the ball. Often the defender may not even be aware that the ball is coming in a direction from which contact is imminent. The save is a deliberate,

otherwise legal attempt to prevent the ball from entering the goal but does not include any effort to direct the ball thereafter to any place in particular. If the ball's contact with a defender is judged to not fit any of these three scenarios, then the contact is considered to be a deliberate play, in which case the attacker's offside position is canceled as of this new play of the ball and there is not an offside violation.

11.11 No Offside Offense Despite Involvement in Active Play

Law 11 provides that no offside offense may be called even though the attacker was in an offside position and became involved in active play by making contact with the ball if the ball had been received directly by this attacker from a throw-in, a goal kick, or a corner kick performed by a teammate.

11.12 Summary Chart of the Decisions Being Made Regarding Offside



Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

12.A Direct Free Kick Fouls

12.A.1 Fouls and Intent

Except for a handling offense, it is not necessary for the player's action to be considered deliberate in the sense that the player intentionally set out to kick, push, trip, hold or otherwise foul the opponent. Under Law 12, the referee makes a decision based on what he or she sees a player actually do, not on what might be in the player's mind.

Where intent may become critical is in the evaluation of any misconduct accompanying the foul.

12.A.2 Careless, Reckless, or Using Excessive Force

There are ten direct free kick fouls listed in Law 12. Of these ten, seven become a foul if and only if the action is performed carelessly, recklessly, or with excessive force:

- Kicks or attempt to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempt to trip an opponent
- Jump at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Tackles an opponent

The remaining three are a foul regardless of how the action was performed:

- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately

If the foul was careless, simply a lack of skill, a miscalculation of strength, faulty judgment or clumsiness by the player who committed it, then it is an ordinary foul, requiring only a direct free kick and possibly a stern talking-to. If the foul was reckless, then the referee must award the direct free kick and also caution the player for unsporting behavior. If the foul involved the use of excessive force, totally beyond the bounds of normal play and threatening danger of injury, then the referee must send off the player for serious foul play or violent conduct, show the red card, and award the direct free kick to the opposing team.

12.A.3 Tripping

Tripping an opponent includes those situations in which the player moves under the opponent and uses the body to upset or upend the opponent. Referees must carefully distinguish an act of tripping from the fact of being tripped. Tripping is an offense if it is clearly directed at an opponent and causes the opponent to falter or fall. Players, however, may trip over or fall over an opponent as a result of natural play and no infringement of the Laws of the Game has been committed.

12.A.4 Charging

Charging an opponent is a common and usually entirely legal element of play. It becomes a foul only when it is performed carelessly, recklessly, or with excessive force.

Although the fair charge is commonly defined as shoulder to shoulder and without the use of arms or elbows, this is not a requirement. In fact, depending on marking pair-ups where the heights vary significantly, shoulder to shoulder may not even be possible. Furthermore, under many normal circumstances, a legal charge may result in an opponent falling to the ground. The legal charge must be directed toward the area of the shoulder and not toward the center of the opponent's back. The referee should recognize that such a charge is at minimum reckless and potentially even violent. The Laws of the Game also require that the ball be within playing distance of both players (see 12.B.3). Performing an otherwise legal charge against an opponent with the ball not within playing distance is considered a form of impeding (see 12.B.2).

It is not a violation of Law 12 for two players to charge the same opponent simultaneously, provided that each charge considered individually is conducted fairly and legally.

12.A.5 Striking

Striking can be performed by direct contact using hands, arms, elbows, head, or knees, or by throwing an object. Whether directly or by throwing something, the location of a striking foul is where contact is made or attempted with the opponent. The target of the striking determines the location of the foul, and thus also the restart.

Striking is implicitly a violent act and referees who have called a striking foul should consider a send-off for serious foul play if committed while competing for the ball or for violent conduct in all other scenarios. Only if the striking was unsuccessful and no contact was made should anything less than a send-off be considered.

In the following scenarios, assume that the object thrown is not the ball and that any misconduct is taken care of before the restart.

- If the striking occurs during a stoppage, the restart is based on what caused the stoppage.
- If a player off the field throws an object at a target on the field who is not an opposing player, the player is considered to have entered the field illegally and the restart is an indirect free kick where the ball was when play was stopped.*
- If a player off the field throws an object at a target on the field who is an opposing player, the player off the field is considered to have committed a striking foul where the opponent on the field was located; a penalty kick if the opponent was in the thrower's penalty area but a direct free kick if anywhere else.*
- If the target is off the field and the thrower is a player on the field, the player has not committed a foul but the misconduct is considered to have been off the field and will therefore result in an indirect free kick where the thrower was.*

- If a substitute off the field or an outside agent anywhere throws an object at anyone off the field, the restart is a dropped ball where the ball was when play was stopped.*
- If a substitute off the field throws an object at anyone on the field or a substitute on the field throws an object at anyone anywhere, the substitute is considered to have entered the field illegally and the restart is an indirect free kick where the ball was when play was stopped.*

For any scenario where the striking is a foul, there are only two significant locations affecting the restart, inside or outside the thrower's penalty area. If the target of the striking is inside the throwing player's penalty area, the restart would be a penalty kick regardless of where the player doing the striking is located. If the target is outside the throwing player's penalty area, the restart would be a direct free kick, regardless of where the player doing the striking is located.

The ball is no different than any other object if it is thrown at a stoppage. However, during play, using the ball as the thrown object involves a handling offense which takes precedence over striking if the thrower is the goalkeeper outside his or her own penalty area or any other player anywhere on the field, and it is the handling offense which determines the restart. If a player taking a throw-in throws the ball at an opponent, follow the guidance outlined in 15.6.

12.A.6 Arm/Elbow Used as Weapon or Tool in Challenging Above the Shoulder

A player's head and neck are easily endangered because they are particularly vulnerable. The elbow and forearm are potentially harmful parts of a player's body because their bones are hard and strong. Although their use comes under the general heading of striking, several guidelines have been specifically developed to assist the referee in understanding the clues to evaluating the use of an elbow and/or arm in challenging above an opponent's shoulder level:

Tool	Weapon
Arm used for balance	Excessive force used
Normal body movement	Opponent's safety endangered
Arm not swung into opponent	Hard surface (forearm/elbow/hand) contacting soft surface (face/neck)
Opponent runs into arm	Arm cocked (using elbow as battering ram)
Arm/elbow out before challenge initiated	Aware of opponent's location
Arm/elbow moved up, not in toward opponent	Arm/elbow moved up and in toward opponent during challenge

If the evidence points to the arm/elbow being used as a weapon, this is misconduct and calls for a send-off for serious foul play or violent conduct. If the tool evidence is persuasive, the referee's response could include no foul, whistling for a careless foul accompanied by a stern warning, or whistling for a reckless foul and cautioning for unsporting behavior.

12.A.7 Tackling

Tackling, like charging, is a normal element of play and usually occurs entirely legally. It becomes a foul if it is not performed properly. One element of an unfair tackle is making contact with the opponent before making contact with the ball. However, the fact that contact with the ball was made first does not automatically mean that the tackle was fair. The declaration by a player that he or she got the ball first is irrelevant if, while tackling for the ball, the player tackles carelessly, recklessly, or with excessive force. Other examples of actions which could lead to a decision that the tackle was unfair include coming in from behind the opponent, coming in with excessive speed, jumping at the feet, raising the leading foot above the height of the ball, using both feet to tackle, or cocking the foot so as to expose the studs.

A foul committed while tackling an opponent with little or no concern for the safety of the opponent shall lead to the player being sent from the field and shown the red card for serious foul play.

12.A.8 Holding

Holding includes grabbing any part of the player's body or uniform or making contact with outstretched arms or legs to force an opponent to slow down or stop. The holding offense can be a continuous action during which the player attempts to interfere with the opponent's movement and the opponent attempts to pull free of the interference. It may start as doubtful or even trifling and may eventually become the basis for a stoppage of play. Referees must therefore understand that, if this continuous action begins near the boundary into the holding player's penalty area and then crosses over into it, a decision to stop play once this line is crossed will result in a penalty kick restart instead of a direct free kick.

12.A.9 Handling the Ball

A handling offense should not be called if:

- the ball moves to the hand.
- the ball strikes the hand unexpectedly.
- the player reflexively moves the hand to protect himself or herself when the ball is coming in at speed and/or from a short distance away.
- the hand is held in a position deemed normal for players of that age and/or experience level.
- A player does not unfairly control or direct a ball that initially made contact with the player's hand entirely accidentally.
- the ball contacts a hand which is not being held away from the body at a restart in order to make the player bigger.

A handling offense should be called (in the absence of the above factors) if:

- a player touches the ball with an object held in the hand (e.g., shirt or shinguard).
- a player makes contact with the ball using a thrown object.

For purposes of recognizing the occurrence of a handling offense, hand includes the entire arm up to but not beyond the shoulder joint.

12.B Indirect Free Kick Fouls

12.B.1 Playing in a Dangerous Manner

Playing in a dangerous manner can be called only if the act, in the opinion of the referee, meets three criteria:

- The act must be dangerous to someone, including the player committing the act.
- It was committed with an opponent close by.
- The dangerous nature of the act caused this opponent to cease or back away from active play for the ball or to be otherwise disadvantaged by the attempt not to participate in the dangerous play.

Merely playing in a dangerous manner is not, by itself, an offense. Playing in a dangerous matter while an opponent is nearby is not, by itself, an offense. The act becomes an offense only when an opponent is adversely and unfairly affected. Playing in a manner considered to be dangerous when only a teammate is nearby is not a foul.

In judging a dangerous play offense, the referee must take into account the experience and skill level of the players. Opponents who are experienced and skilled may be more likely to accept the danger and play through. Additionally, in adult amateur matches, the players are old enough to be deemed able to make such decisions. Younger players have neither the experience nor the skill to judge the danger adequately and, in such cases, the referee must intervene on behalf of their safety.

12.B.2 Impeding the Progress of an Opponent

Impeding the progress of an opponent means moving on the field so as to obstruct, interfere with, or block the path of an opponent. Impeding can include crossing directly in front of the opponent or running between the opponent and the ball so as to form an obstacle with the aim of forcing the opponent to stop, swerve, or slow down. There will be many occasions during a game when a player will be between an opponent and the ball, but in the majority of such instances, this is quite natural and fair. It is often possible for a player not playing the ball to be in the path of an opponent and still not be guilty of impeding.

The offense of impeding an opponent requires that the ball not be within playing distance. Physical contact between the player and the opponent is normally absent. If physical contact occurs and the contact is considered careless, reckless or involving excessive force, the referee should consider instead that a charging foul has been committed (see 12.A.4). Nonviolent physical contact may occur while impeding the progress of an opponent if, in the opinion of the referee, this contact was an unavoidable consequence of the opponent's momentum.

12.B.3 The Concept of Playing Distance

The referee's judgment of playing distance should be based on the player's ability to play the ball, not upon any arbitrary standard such as a specific number of feet or steps a player is away from the ball. The decision as to whether a player is or is not within playing distance of the ball belongs solely to the referee.

12.B.4 Goalkeeper Possession of the Ball

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

- held with both hands,
- held by trapping the ball between one hand and any surface (e.g., the ground, a goalpost, the goalkeeper's body), or
- held in a single hand (gripped or in an outstretched open hand).

Once established, possession is maintained while the ball is held as described above, while bouncing the ball on the ground, running with the ball, or while throwing it into the air. Possession is given up if, after throwing the ball into the air, it is allowed to hit the ground. For purposes of determining goalkeeper possession, the holding includes contact with any part of the goalkeeper's arm from the fingertips to the shoulder.

When a goalkeeper has possession of the ball, any attempt by any opponent to charge, tackle, or otherwise challenge for the ball is prohibited. Such a challenge is considered to be a direct free kick foul because it is directed at the person of the goalkeeper and not as a legal attempt to gain the ball. A ball controlled by the goalkeeper using means other than his or her hands is open to legal challenge by an opponent. The referee must consider the age and skill level of the players in evaluating goalkeeper possession and err on the side of safety.

12.B.5 Preventing the Goalkeeper from Releasing the Ball into Play

An opponent may not interfere with or block the goalkeeper's release of the ball into play. While opponents have a right to maintain a position achieved during the normal course of play up until the goalkeeper has gained possession of the ball, they may not thereafter act to block the goalkeeper's movement while he or she is holding the ball or do anything which hinders, interferes with, or blocks the goalkeeper who is throwing or punting the ball back into play. An opponent does not violate the Laws of the Game if he or she is able to take control of the ball after the goalkeeper has fully released it into play.

12.B.6 The Six-Second Requirement

Because a ball cannot be legally challenged while in the possession of the goalkeeper, the time the goalkeeper can withhold the ball from challenge is limited to six seconds. This restriction is not intended to include time taken by the goalkeeper while gaining control of the ball or while moving to avoid an opponent who is maintaining his or her place on the field.

The referee should not count the seconds aloud or with hand gestures or motions. If the goalkeeper is making a reasonable effort to release the ball into play, the referee should allow the benefit of the doubt. Before penalizing a goalkeeper for violating this time limit, the referee should warn the goalkeeper about such actions and then should penalize the violation only if the goalkeeper continues to waste time or commits the same infringement again later in the match.

12.B.7 Second Possession of the Ball by Goalkeeper

Usually, examples of this indirect free kick foul by a goalkeeper are obvious and due to simple goalkeeper errors. 12.B.4 defined possession in terms of holding the ball but, by tradition and interpretation, possession includes situations in which the goalkeeper parries the ball. Parry can only be understood in contrast with a save, rebound, or deflection of the ball from the hand, none of which would be considered possession. The decision hinges on the degree to which the goalkeeper in fact controlled and directed the ball, no matter how momentary, and the responsibility for this decision rests solely with the referee.

Possession by parrying the ball is not an offense, it merely establishes that the goalkeeper cannot thereafter touch the ball again unless there has been an intervening touch or play of the ball by someone else. Any second contact with the ball by the goalkeeper's hand is not allowed if it occurs directly following a parry.

12.B.8 Handling by the Goalkeeper of a Ball Kicked or Thrown by a Teammate

A goalkeeper commits an indirect free kick violation if he or she makes contact (with his or her hand) with the ball directly following a teammate deliberately kicking the ball or performing a throw-in restart. This includes situations where the initial contact with the ball by the goalkeeper may involve gaining control by some other means, by foot or chest trap, either inside or outside the goalkeeper's penalty area, but which is then followed directly by handling inside the goalkeeper's penalty area. Any contact with the goalkeeper's hands is a violation, not just possession. Also note that, where the prior action is a deliberate kick by a teammate, "kick" is defined as any play of the ball with the foot, including merely placing a foot on the ball to stop its motion.

12.B.9 Four Indirect Free Kick Fouls Only the Goalkeeper Can Commit

The indirect free kick fouls described in 12.B.6 through 12.B.8 can only be committed by a goalkeeper and represent restrictions on the goalkeeper's unique ability in the Laws of the Game to withhold the ball from an opponent's challenge by handling the ball within the goalkeeper's own penalty area. The intelligent implementation of these restrictions on goalkeepers requires understanding why the restrictions exist in the first place so that the referee can better distinguish when a violation is trifling and when it occurred for the clear purpose of unfairly preventing a legal challenge for the ball.

Referees must also understand that the goalkeeper can never be called for preventing a goal or obvious goal-scoring opportunity by handling the ball inside the goalkeeper's own penalty area even if that handling is itself an indirect free kick foul.

12.B.10 Charging the Goalkeeper

As noted in 12.B.4, any charge, tackle, or other form of challenge for the ball is not allowed if the goalkeeper has possession of the ball. When not in possession of the ball, including any time the goalkeeper is controlling the ball using any part of his or her body other than the hands, the goalkeeper can be legally challenged by an opponent anywhere on the field. Referees must observe carefully and closely any challenge involving a goalkeeper or any sequence of play likely to lead to such a challenge. This is critical not only to make a correct decision as to whether there was possession but

also because teammates of the goalkeeper may react aggressively if they believe the challenge was improper and because there are inherent dangers in the goalkeeper role which can be magnified by challenges even where they may be entirely legal.

12.C Cautionable Offenses

12.C.1 Categorizing Cautionable Offenses

Every cautionable offense committed in a match for which a yellow card is displayed must be assigned, for game report purposes, one and only one of the seven basic categories of cautionable offense listed in Law 12. An action on the field may include elements of several categories but only one can be selected as the official basis for the caution. The selection in such cases is solely the responsibility of the referee but, generally, the guideline is to report the category which (a) best describes what occurred, (b) happened first if there was a series of actions, or (c) is the most serious in terms of its impact on the match. If the same action was both cautionable and a send-off offense, the referee should select the send-off category and simply note in the report any other misconduct which occurred simultaneously.

Where a sequence of misconduct offenses has occurred over a short period of time, it is permissible to show more than one card of the same or different colors, for each offense but no card can be shown past the display of a red card as this is the maximum punishment available. Accordingly, at any stoppage, a referee may show at most a yellow card, a second yellow card, and then a red card because the player had committed two separate, not simultaneous cautionable offenses and the red card was for the showing of the second yellow card. The other multiple card scenario would be a yellow card for a cautionable offense which was followed by a red card for a sequentially separate second offense meriting a send-off. Although the general preference is for a player to have displayed to him or her the appropriate cards in the sequence in which the behavior occurred, game control concerns may warrant showing the red card first. Under no circumstances, however, may any card, regardless of color, be shown for any conduct occurring after an offense for which the player has received a red card but such misconduct must be included in the match report.

It is traditional to not display a yellow or red card to a player who is injured and still on the ground or while being carried off the field. Depending on the circumstances, the referee should wait to display the card until the player is in a condition to be confronted or, if this is not possible, the card may be displayed to the team captain with a clear indication as to who is the actual recipient.

12.C.2 Restarts for Misconduct During Play¹

Who	Where	Circumstances	Restart/Location
Player	On field	Foul with misconduct	Based on foul
Player	On field	Misconduct without foul	IFK/at misconduct location*
Player	Off field	Left to commit misconduct ²	IFK/at ball location*
Player	Off field	Left during course of play, or with referee permission, or by referee's order ²	Dropped ball/at ball location*
Substitute	On field	Entered during play	IFK/at ball location* (illegal entry)
Substitute	Off field	None	Dropped ball/at ball location*

¹If misconduct occurs during a stoppage, the restart is based on the reason for the stoppage.

² The decision as to whether the player left the field for the purpose of committing misconduct belongs solely to the referee.

12.C.3 The Decision to Caution

As with stopping play or applying advantage for a foul, the referee is expected to evaluate a player's behavior based on several critical factors:

- Does the action meet the generally accepted and understood meaning of the misconduct?
- Would the issuance of a caution for this misconduct likely have desirable results for game and/or player management?

If the player's action meets the criteria for the misconduct, is not trifling, and its punishment will likely have a beneficial effect, the caution should be given, but Law 5 allows the referee to wait until the next stoppage of play to display the card. In general, the decision about whether or not to stop play for misconduct involves the application of the same advantage concept that is used to decide about stopping play for a foul (see 5.6).

One consideration which should be taken into account in applying discretion is how concretely the misconduct is described in the Laws of the Game and its interpretations. Discretion is broad where the misconduct is briefly mentioned only in general terms like dissent, persistent infringement, or unsporting behavior, but must be considered more restricted when described in explicit terms. Even in the case of unsporting behavior, numerous examples of unsporting behavior are spread throughout the Laws of the Game with some being much more concretely described (goalkeeper changes places with a field player without permission) and others are mentioned only in general terms (showing a lack of respect for the game).

12.C.4 Unsporting Behavior

Referees are urged to review the list of examples of unsporting behavior to be found in the Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees as well as in U.S. Soccer training materials for newer referees. Other examples include:

- Commits a direct free kick foul while tackling for the ball from behind without endangering the safety of an opponent.
- Interferes with or prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from the hands into play.
- Uses tobacco products.
- Uses a cellular or other mobile phone or communication device.
- Uses an artificial aid to unfairly assist play – for example, leaning on the shoulders of a teammate to increase height, using an article of clothing to avoid direct contact with the ball, removing the corner flag on a corner kick, hanging on the crossbar.
- Handles the ball in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a goal.
- Enters the field of play as a substitute without the referee's permission.
- At a penalty kick, feints to kick the ball once the run-up to the ball has been completed.
- Participates in a pattern of fouls targeting the same opponent.

12.C.5 Dissent

Dissent is committed by words, actions (including gestures), or a combination of the two. The referee should evaluate dissent in terms of the extent to which it is provocative, public, and personal:

- provocative refers to the content, i.e., what exactly is said or done;
- public refers to loudness or visibility of the content; the extent to which the dissent can be seen or heard, and
- personal refers to the dissent being clearly directed at any official.

The objective in dealing with dissent is to:

- support the spirit of the game,
- maintain the authority of the officials, and
- reduce the likelihood of such behavior becoming widespread.

A goalkeeper who leaves the penalty area to engage the referee or an assistant referee in debate regarding a decision has committed dissent. A substitute or substituted player may also be cautioned for dissent.

12.C.6 Persistent Infringement

Persistent infringement occurs when a player repeatedly commits fouls or certain other infringements. The multiple infractions can be any combination of fouls covered in Law 12 or a second violation of Law 14 after having been previously warned. Because "persistent" is not defined as any certain minimum or maximum number, it is recommended that the referee warn the player that the limit of tolerance has been reached and that a further occurrence would constitute persistent infringement. Of course, the referee must be prepared to follow through if necessary. If the pattern is quickly and blatantly established, then the warning might be omitted and the referee should take immediate action. In determining whether there is persistent infringement, all fouls are considered.

Referees should not become attached to any specific number of fouls as a threshold for persistent infringement but, instead, look to the number of fouls committed by the player over a period of time.

If a player has already established a pattern of persistently committing fouls and has been cautioned for this reason, the subsequent commission of another foul could be the basis for a second caution for persistent infringement if the referee deems the foul to be part of the same pattern.

12.C.7 Deliberately Leaving the Field Without the Referee's Permission

Players who leave the field without the referee's permission occasionally do so for unsporting reasons -- for example, to create an unfair offside situation (see 11.6) or as a form of dissent. However, the reason more often is a simple mistake on the player's part of not asking for permission or because the player is not only leaving the field but the game as well.

If a player does leave the field without the referee's permission and then returns to gain a tactical advantage for his or her team, the player has committed misconduct and must be cautioned and shown the yellow card.

Where it is apparent to the referee that the player leaving the field without permission has not done so to express dissent or to gain an unfair advantage, for example to quickly retrieve an inhaler, and has merely forgotten to obtain permission or thought some vague action by the referee had given permission, the referee should consider this a trifling breach of the Laws of the Game. A warning to the player should be sufficient in such circumstances.

12.C.8 Provoking Confrontation by Touching or Controlling the Ball at a Restart

Referees should take all appropriate actions to prevent this tactic from being attempted in the first place. It is often possible to anticipate such player behavior and to stop it.

Further, the specific situations which are of concern are those in which a player is seeking to gain control of a ball when one or more opponents, who have the restart, are also attempting to possess the ball—thus provoking a confrontation. Merely touching the ball after a stoppage is not an offense. The caution for delaying the restart of play should be reserved for those situations where a confrontation is actually provoked or is imminent or when a player persists in this behavior despite the referee's best efforts to prevent it.

12.D Sending-Off Offenses

12.D.1 Send-Off as a Result of a Second Caution

A player who receives a second caution must initially be shown the yellow card for the misconduct and then must be shown the red card for the second caution. These are separate actions and at no time are both cards shown together. The second caution leading to dismissal from the field can occur at any time during the period of the referee's authority (see 5.3).

12.D.2 Evaluating Language

The referee should judge offensive, insulting, or abusive language according to its content, the extent to which the language can be heard by others beyond the immediate vicinity of the player, and whether the language is directed at officials, opponents, or teammates. In other words, the referee must watch for language that is provocative, public, and personal. In evaluating language as a send-off offense, the referee must take into account the particular circumstances in which the actions occurred and deal reasonably with language that was clearly the result of a momentary emotional outburst. Matches where teams or individual players use languages not known to the members of the officiating team present special challenges and, in such cases, referees are advised to monitor closely the reactions of opposing players to see if anyone is offended, insulted, or abused. The referee's primary focus must be on the effective management of the match and the players in the context of the overall feel for the Spirit of the Game.

12.D.3 Restarts After a Send-Off

For restart purposes, a send-off offense is the same as a cautionable offense. Review and follow the table in 12.C.2.

12.D.4 Serious Foul Play and Violent Conduct

It is serious foul play when a player uses violence or excessive force when challenging for the ball on the field against an opponent. There can be no serious foul play against a teammate, the referee, an assistant referee, a spectator, etc. The use of violence or excessive force against anyone else or against an opponent under any other conditions must be punished as violent conduct.

It is also serious foul play if a player commits any tackle which endangers the safety of an opponent. In this case, the tackle may be from behind, from the side, or from the front.

Any use of violence or excessive force by a substitute, regardless of whom it is against or when and where it occurs, is to be recorded and reported as violent conduct.

12.D.5 Preventing a Goal by Handling the Ball

A player, including the goalkeeper who is outside his or her own penalty area, must be sent off and shown the red card if he or she successfully prevents a goal by handling the ball. This punishment applies even to those situations in which the player who touched or played the ball prior to the handling was someone from the player's own team who was about to score on himself or herself. The send-off is justified only if the handling was successful in preventing a goal. If a goal is scored despite the handling foul, the player committing the handling should be cautioned for unsporting behavior.

The defining criterion for successfully preventing a goal is that, but for the handling, the ball would have likely gone into the goal in the opinion of the referee. The likelihood should be judged using the speed and direction of the ball, as well the distance to the goal from which the ball was played and the number of defenders other than the handling player who might be able to defend legally. Handling the ball to prevent its

going to another player who might be able to score a goal does not qualify for a send-off under this category of misconduct; it would, however, be cautionable as a tactical foul.

12.D.6 Committing an Offense Punishable by a Free Kick or Penalty Kick Which Interferes with a Goal-Scoring Opportunity

The send-off for interfering with a goal-scoring opportunity depends critically on the referee's judgment regarding all four of the following factors:

- Number of Defenders – no more than one defender (not counting the defender who committed the foul) between the foul and the goal being attacked. The judgment here involves determining if a defender, who may be closer to the goal line than the location of the foul, is nevertheless unable to provide any effective defense, and should therefore not be counted in this factor.
- Distance to Goal – the closer the location of the foul is to the goal, the stronger is the opportunity to score a goal. There is no cut-off number of feet or yards, only the referee's decision that the specific distance provides an obvious opportunity.
- Distance to Ball – an attacker who is fouled at a moment when the ball has been played beyond what is, in the referee's opinion, a reasonable playing distance will have been unlikely to effectively maintain the attack.
- Direction of Play – the attacker must have been moving toward the goal at the time the foul occurs. A brief diversion to one side or another to avoid a defender does not change a decision that the main direction is still toward the goal.

Note that, although the term "foul" has been used in describing the conditions of these factors, any offense which would result in a free kick or a penalty kick could be committed to interfere with a goal-scoring opportunity.

Simply because the referee has decided that an offense has interfered with an obvious goal-scoring opportunity does not mean that the referee must stop play immediately. Advantage applies and the referee should wait to see if the interference continues or whether the attacker's team is able to maintain its attack with at least the same level of credibility as before. As with any other application of advantage, the referee can stop play, return to the original offense where the interference originally occurred, and delay the restart to send off the defender. Where the interference was not successful and a goal was scored, a send-off is not warranted for the interference unless the offense itself comes under another send-off category of misconduct. Note the guidance in 5.6 that, in most cases, advantage should not be applied to violent behavior.

This approach is particularly crucial if the interference occurs within the defending team's penalty area. The need to wait and see if a goal is scored within the next play or two (a matter of seconds) is vital. Within the penalty area, a credible attack is defined as the likelihood of scoring a goal. If the goal is not scored, stop play and signal for a penalty kick. There is no likelihood of scoring a goal if the play is following directly from a dropped ball, throw-in, or an indirect free kick by anyone or from any other restart performed by the team which has committed the interference.

Law 13 – Free Kicks

13.1 Enforcing the Minimum Distance at a Free Kick

An attacking team may exercise its right to take a free kick immediately if the kicker sees a beneficial opportunity in doing so even with an opponent closer than the minimum distance. Referees must not interfere with this right by doing anything which might give the appearance that the kick may not be taken without a signal from the referee.

However, the attacking team may not thereafter claim a violation of the distance requirement if the ball is kicked to an infringing opponent who is able to control the ball without moving to it. In this case, because the attacking team itself has considered the encroachment trivial, the referee must accept the kicker's decision even if it produces unintended results. Of course, if the opponent's interference with the ball from within ten yards is enabled by moving, jumping, or extending a leg to the ball, then the opponent has violated Law 13. A caution for failing to respect the required distance must be given and the free kick is retaken at the original location. In situations where there is no contact with the ball, the referee must decide if the movement alone constituted an interference or whether it would be preferable simply to warn the opponent about this sort of behavior and then to exercise additional care to ensure that the opposing player or team is not more successful in this misconduct in the future.

Where the referee has a specific and compelling reason to delay the restart (card for misconduct, injury evaluation, substitution request allowed by the local rules, a request by the attacking team to enforce the minimum distance, and so forth – see 5.10), the need to wait for a whistle must be announced quickly and clearly to prevent confusion and the need to call back a quickly-taken restart. The recommended procedure is to state that the restarting team must wait for the whistle, accompanied if necessary by the commonly understood act of pointing to the whistle, and making eye contact with the presumed kicker. Under these circumstances, an attacker who restarts play before the whistle is blown should be verbally warned and, upon repetition, be cautioned for unsporting behavior. The free kick in such cases must be retaken.

It is critical to set the tone early on all free kick restarts. To do so, the referee must set standards and then hold the players accountable. Failing to deal early with encroachment and interference makes it more difficult to get the minimum distance in areas of the field where the consequences of this failure are more critical as the game develops.

13.2 Opponent Attempting to Delay a Free Kick

Opponents engage in a different form of misconduct when they act to delay a free kick. While delay is a byproduct of interfering with the free kick by failing to respect the minimum distance, there is a difference between merely being within ten yards of the restart, which may or may not cause a delay, and using certain ploys which necessarily will result in a delay.

Typical examples of causing a delay in this way are kicking the ball away when a decision has gone against them, picking up the ball and not giving the ball to the attacking team or to the referee, moving to retrieve a ball some distance away and then walking slowly to bring the ball back, and standing so close by the ball as to effectively interfere with all reasonably likely directions for the restart. These ploys must be met with an immediate response because, as a result, a delay is no longer theoretical; it has been forced and the challenge to Law 13 must be dealt with swiftly.

13.3 When the Ball Is in Play

The ball is in play (able to be played by an attacker other than the kicker or by an opponent) when it has been kicked and moved. The distance to be moved is minimal and the kick need only be a touch of the ball with the foot in a kicking motion or being dragged with the top or bottom of the foot. Simply tapping the top of the ball with the foot or stepping on the ball is not sufficient.

When the restart of play is based on the ball being kicked and moved, the referee must ensure that the ball is indeed kicked and moved. The referee must make the final decision on if the ball was or was not kicked and moved.

The referee must judge carefully whether any particular contact between the foot and the ball and subsequent movement was indeed reasonably taken with the intention of putting the ball into play rather than with the intention merely to position the ball for the restart. If the ball is just being repositioned, play has not been restarted. Likewise, referees should not unfairly punish for failing to respect the required distance when an opponent was clearly confused by a touch or movement of the ball which was not a restart.

13.4 Indirect Free Kick for Misconduct

When play is stopped solely to deal with misconduct committed by a player on the field, the indirect free kick is taken from the place where the misconduct occurred. If the referee applies advantage to the misconduct and subsequently stops play when the advantage no longer exists, the restart is still taken from the place where the original misconduct occurred.

13.5 Referee Signals for Free Kicks

There is a difference between the referee's signal that play has been stopped for a free kick offense and the referee's signal for which type of free kick must be used for the restart. In the first case, it is an arm pointed toward the end of the field being attacked by the team given the restart; in the second case, there is no further signal if the kick is direct but, if the kick is to be indirect, the arm is held straight up. Although the indirect free kick signal may be given quickly to alert the teams as to which type of free kick will be taken, the referee is only obligated to hold the signal from the time the kick is taken until the ball is next touched or played by any player other than the original kicker or the ball goes out of play. These signals are important tools of communication and must be given properly in order not to confuse players.

If the referee fails to give the correct signal for an indirect free kick or fails to hold it for the required period of time, the indirect free kick must be retaken, regardless of the outcome. This also applies to an incorrect signal for a direct free kick.

13.6 Free Kicks within Goal-Scoring Distance

There are three critical areas of concern which must be monitored when a free kick is given within scoring distance of the opposing team's goal:

- fouls and misconduct within the wall,
- an offside violation, and
- the scoring of a goal.

It is important that the pregame discussion cover these concerns and assign responsibility to the referee and the lead assistant referee as needed under different scenarios.

The referee must select the area of concern which has the highest priority under the particular circumstances of the restart. Such factors as distance to goal, behavior in prior free kicks under similar circumstances, the nature of the foul or misconduct which produced the restart, the relative experience of the referee and lead assistant referee, among others, should be evaluated. This means that, in general, the referee takes responsibility for wall behavior and the lead assistant referee takes a position to assist with decisions regarding whether a goal is scored. This leaves the issue of allocating responsibility for monitoring a possible offside violation. The referee should include in the pregame discussion a general preference regarding this decision.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

14.1 Calling the Penalty Kick

The penalty kick is a ceremonial restart which is awarded when the defending team commits a direct free kick foul within its own penalty area. There is no requirement as to the severity or seriousness of the foul, the score of the game, the amount of time remaining in the period of play, the direction play was moving, the likelihood of a goal being scored, or any factor other than a defender committing a direct free kick foul inside the defender's penalty area. Referees are reminded that it is the location of the foul, not the position of the ball, which determines whether a penalty kick is the correct restart.

14.2 Placement of the Ball

The ball must be placed correctly at the penalty mark, regardless of the state of the field at this location. Moving the ball elsewhere, even with the apparent agreement of the players, is not permitted.

14.3 Penalty Kick Taken Without Referee's Signal

If the penalty kick is taken before the referee whistles, the kicker should be warned and, upon repetition, cautioned for unsporting behavior. The kick must be retaken regardless of its outcome. Advantage cannot be applied to this violation as it involves a restart requirement.

14.4 Penalty Kick Is Retaken

Regardless of the reason, if a penalty kick must be retaken, it is not required that the same player perform the retake.

14.5 Goalkeeper Movement

Once the referee whistles for the penalty kick, the goalkeeper may move from side to side on the goal line, but may not move forward off the goal line until the ball has been kicked. The requirement to be on the goal line is met even if one or both of the goalkeeper's feet are not physically touching the ground, so long as the goalkeeper has not moved forward from the plane of the goal line. In the context of a penalty kick, forward means only the feet: it is entirely legal for other parts of the goalkeeper's body to be beyond the plane of the goal line.

14.6 Kicking the Ball Forward for a Teammate

The penalty kick, by accident or intent, may be played only a short distance forward. Teammates of the kicker, as well as defenders, are allowed to run forward to play the ball provided they were properly positioned at the time the ball was put into play.

14.7 Penalty Kick Called Near the End of a Period of Play

Penalty kicks, once awarded, are taken regardless of the amount of time remaining in any period of play. If time expires or will expire before the restart can occur, the referee should announce this fact and indicate clearly that the penalty kick is now being taken

in extended time. No player other than the goalkeeper can participate in play after the penalty kick is taken. In case of an extended time penalty kick, the goalkeeper may be replaced, if necessary, by a substitute if the maximum number of substitutions has not been exceeded, or by an eligible player on the field. All players must remain on the field until the penalty kick has been completed. The referee has no authority to make the players leave the field or the vicinity of the penalty area for the taking of a penalty kick in extended time.

At the taking of a penalty kick in extended time, violations of Law 14 are handled the same as if the kick were not in extended time but with the following exception: if the required restart after a violation would be an indirect free kick, the kick in extended time and the period of play are considered over.

14.8 Infringements

Violations of the Laws of the Game prior to the referee's whistle are handled the same as any other misconduct occurring while the ball is not in play. Violations after the ball has been put into play are handled the same as any other similar event occurring during regular play. All restrictions on player positioning and movement imposed by Law 14 end when the ball is properly put into play.

Law 14 violations include the kicker not performing the kick properly, the goalkeeper failing to stay on the goal line between the goal posts, and one or more teammates of the kicker or goalkeeper failing to maintain their required positions during the period between the signal to take the kick and the ball being in play. Most occurrences of these violations are summarized in the following chart.

Infringement committed by	Outcome of the penalty kick	
	Ball goes into goal	Ball does not go into goal
Attacker (including the kicker)	Retake penalty kick	Indirect free kick ¹
Defender (including the goalkeeper)	Goal (kick-off)	Retake penalty kick
Both attacker and defender	Retake penalty kick	Retake penalty kick

¹The indirect free kick is taken from the penalty mark if the infringement is committed by the kicker; otherwise, the restart is taken from the location of the infringement.

The referee who observes any Law 14 infringement must nevertheless allow the kick to be taken. The decision as to how the referee should respond is based on the above chart (or the exceptions noted below in 14.9) and assumes that the violation should be whistled. Violations deemed trifling should draw a warning but not a card for misconduct. If the same player violates Law 14 again either at the same or a subsequent penalty kick, the player should be cautioned for persistent infringement.

14.9 Exceptions to Table in 14.8

- If an attacker other than the identified kicker takes the penalty kick, play is restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team at the penalty mark, regardless of the outcome of any kick that may have been performed by this attacker.
- If the kicker plays the ball backward, play is restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team at the penalty mark, regardless of any further play that may result from the kicker's action.

14.10 Violations of Law 14 by Kicker

The kicker is normally expected to make one continuous run to the ball when the referee signals for the kick to be taken. If the run begins too far away or involves unnecessarily complicated changes in direction or pacing, the referee should stop further play, advise the kicker that such actions unfairly delay the restart, and signal for a new start. Other violations by the kicker happen too close to the performance of the kick to allow for a stoppage of play (e.g., running past the ball and then backing up before kicking or using hand or arm gestures which, in the opinion of the referee, serve to distract or deceive the goalkeeper). In these cases, the kick is allowed to be taken and the referee's response is based on the Table in 14.8.

The kicker may incorporate a feinting action on his or her way to the ball. However, having completed the run to the ball, the kicker may not feint during the actual taking of the kick as this is deemed an unfair distraction to the goalkeeper. The kick is nevertheless allowed to be taken with the addition that the kicker will be cautioned for unsporting behavior before the restart is taken as prescribed by the Table in 14.8.

14.11 Completion of the Penalty Kick

Unlike other restarts, the penalty kick is not considered completed as soon as the ball is in play. Completion of the penalty kick is solely at the referee's discretion but is based on the possibility of a goal being scored because the ball is still on its way to the goal. In other words, as long as the ball is in motion within the confines of the field and no contact is made with anything other than the ground, goal frame, or the goalkeeper, it is possible for a goal to be scored and therefore the penalty kick is not over.

The purpose of this guideline is to establish the conditions under which an event that illegally interferes with a player or the ball while the ball is on its way to the goal becomes grounds for ordering the retake of the penalty kick. Given the reason why a penalty is given in the first place, this guideline is based on the traditional principle that the team given this restart should have a fair opportunity to score and anything which illegally interferes with this should result in the opportunity being restored. At the same time, the opposing team deserves a fair chance to defend.

Law 15 – The Throw-In

15.1 Location of Throw-in

Although the throw-in is to be taken from the point where the ball left the field of play, this requirement is satisfied if the restart occurs within approximately one yard of this location. A throw-in taken beyond this limit is an infringement of Law 15.

15.2 Ball in Play Requirements

The ball is in play on a throw-in when the ball:

- touches the plane of the touchline and
- leaves the thrower's hands.

It is rarely necessary to judge either of these conditions separately, only that they both have occurred. The ball is not in play on a throw-in if it leaves the hands but, before it touches the plane of the touchline, makes contact with the ground outside the field, even if the ball subsequently enters the field.

Referees must carefully distinguish between meeting the conditions for the ball being in play versus meeting the procedural requirements for performing the throw-in. Though related, these are two different decisions which, in combination, can produce different outcomes. The referee's response must be guided by the following:

Scenario	Decision
In play and no procedural violations	Throw-in is good, play continues
In play and with procedural violation(s)	Throw-in given to opposing team
Not in play and no procedural violations	Throw-in is retaken by same team
Not in play and with procedural violation(s)	Throw-in given to opposing team

Whenever a throw-in is retaken, by either the same team or the opposing team, the location of the retake must still meet the requirement of being within a yard of where the ball originally left the field.

A throw-in which involves one or more procedural violations, for which the referee has stopped play, cannot be given back to the same team in order to perform the restart correctly (local rule exceptions sometimes allow this in recreational matches involving very young players).

It is not a violation of Law 15 to perform a throw-in using what is commonly called the flip method, provided all the procedural requirements are met. On the other hand, under no circumstances may a throw-in be performed from the kneeling position even if it appears that all procedural requirements have been met.

15.3 Exception to the Use of Both Hands

A player who lacks the normal use of one or both hands may nevertheless perform a legal throw-in provided all other requirements of Law 15 are observed.

15.4 Doubtful or Trifling Infringements of Procedural Requirements

Referees are reminded that the primary function of the throw-in is to put the ball back into play as quickly as possible. At competitive levels of play, therefore, apparent technical infringements of Law 15 should often be deemed trifling, so long as the team performing the throw-in does not unfairly benefit and the restart occurs with little or no delay. Under no circumstances, however, may advantage (see 5.6) be applied to any procedural requirement for the throw-in.

15.5 Obligations of Opponents

All opponents must stand no closer than two yards from where the throw-in is taken. In practice, the minimum distance is measured from the point on the touchline at which the ball enters the field, not from where the thrower makes the throw.

Opponents are prohibited from unfairly distracting, interfering with, or impeding a player who is putting the ball back into play on a throw-in. This is a cautionable offense for unsporting behavior even if done from a greater distance than two yards. This means that an opponent may not jump about or wave his or her arms in a distracting manner or move to block the freedom of movement of the thrower or the direction of the throw. Merely standing in front of the thrower, however, providing this position is maintained without movement and is at least two yards from the location of the throw-in, is not an offense. The decision if a thrower has been unfairly distracted or impeded by an opponent, regardless of the distance, is solely the referee's discretion.

Referees should manage the minimum distance requirement of a throw-in the same way they manage the minimum distance requirement for free kicks (see 13.1). Among other things, this means that the thrower has the option of performing the restart even if an opponent is closer than two yards and that the referee should not ordinarily interfere with quick throw-in restarts to enforce the minimum distance unless this is requested by the thrower. If a player is cautioned for violating this requirement, it must be reported as a failure to respect the minimum distance. If an opponent makes a blatant and obvious attempt to prevent the throw-in from occurring by standing so close that the throw cannot occur or by following the thrower who is attempting to evade such interference, the referee should immediately prevent the restart, caution the opponent for delaying the restart of play, and then signal for the throw-in to be taken.

15.6 Throw-In Strikes an Opponent

A throw-in taken in such a way that the ball strikes an opponent is not by itself a violation of the Law. The act must be evaluated separately as a form of striking and dealt with appropriately if judged to be unsporting behavior or violent conduct. In either event, if deemed a violation, the restart is located at the place where the throw-in struck the opponent. If the throw-in is additionally deemed to have been taken incorrectly, the correct restart is a throw-in for the opposing team at the original location.

Law 16 – The Goal Kick

16.1 Scoring Directly from a Goal Kick

The team given a goal kick can score a goal directly from this restart only against the opposing team. If the ball is properly put into play from the goal kick and then goes directly into the goal of the kicking team, the proper restart is a corner kick for the opposing team.

Because a team cannot score directly against itself from a goal kick, no infringement of the Laws of the Game by a member of the kicking team can be considered to have prevented a goal or a goal-scoring opportunity within the meaning of Law 12 without some intervening touch/play of the ball. However, any intervening contact with the ball by a defender under these circumstances (including the defending goalkeeper) which is by itself a violation of the Laws of the Game is subject to the application of advantage should the ball continue into the goal despite this contact.

16.2 Opponents Must Remain Outside the Penalty Area Until the Ball Is in Play

An opponent who infringes on the requirement to remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play should be warned and, upon a repetition, cautioned for persistent infringement. In any event, the goal kick is retaken.

16.3 Timewasting by the Kicking Team

Upon being awarded a goal kick, the defending team wastes time if the ball is clearly placed in the goal area in preparation for the restart and then is moved unnecessarily to another location in the goal area. If the referee decides to deal immediately with this offense, the proper action is to caution for delaying the restart of play. If the referee has warned the team previously for this offense, its repetition is punished by a caution for persistent infringement. To the extent possible, the referee should deal proactively to prevent such delays.

Law 17 – The Corner Kick

17.1 Uncertainty as to the Correct Corner

The referee must never display any uncertainty as to the corner to use for this restart. In situations where there may be an initial doubt, select a corner and announce the decision clearly and with authority.

17.2 Confrontations Between Opponents Before and at the Taking of a Corner Kick

While the actual performance of a corner kick rarely is the source of controversy, the same cannot be said regarding the behavior of defenders and attackers congregating in the goal area and jockeying for position. Depending on game and player management factors specific to the match being officiated, the referee may take a proactive or reactive approach to dealing with such problems.

Where actual contact between opposing players might lead to undesirable reactions even before the kick is taken, the referee's commanding presence may defuse the situation. Where this proves insufficient, a targeted caution for unsporting behavior or a send-off may be appropriate. Because the corner kick has not yet been taken, the misconduct being punished will not change the restart. The referee must be sensitive to the possibility of misconduct under these circumstances being committed by either defenders, or attackers.

At other times, the misconduct might be nonexistent or proceed at a low intensity level right up to the corner kick and then flash into something more serious. When this happens, the referee has no choice but to react to the behavior:

- If the primary instigator is a defender and the conduct involves a direct free kick foul, then stopping play means that a penalty kick must be given and the misconduct would draw the appropriate card. However, if the ball enters the goal from the corner kick, advantage would be applied, the goal counted, and play would resume with a kick-off, after dealing with misconduct.
- If the primary instigator is an attacker and the behavior includes committing a foul, the defenders must be given a direct or indirect free kick but, if there is no foul, the restart would be an indirect free kick where the ball was when play was stopped.* If the ball enters the goal from the corner kick, the goal must be disallowed.
- In case of multiple fouls and/or misconduct committed by players of both teams, the referee must sort out which occurred first or which was the offense for which play was stopped and use that to determine which team has possession for which type of restart.

Regarding the above scenarios, it is important to make sure that the offending behavior occurred after the ball was properly put into play. If the reason for the stoppage occurred before this, the referee must follow the guidelines in the preceding paragraph.

Kicks from the Penalty Mark

K.1 Phases of the Process

The kicks from the mark process involves two phases – preparation and execution. Preparation begins with the whistle ending the final period of play and continues until the physical taking of the first kick. Execution begins with the taking of the first valid kick and ends either when the process concludes with the determination of a winner or upon the referee's decision that further kicks cannot be taken due to external conditions.

K.2 Eligibility to Participate

The requirement that a player, to be eligible to participate, must be on the field at the end of the final period of play is met if, at that time, the player is temporarily off the field:

- in the normal course of play
- with the permission of the referee, or
- by order of the referee (e.g., bleeding, blood on the uniform, or an equipment violation).

The requirement is also met if at any time an ineligible player is permitted to substitute for an injured goalkeeper. Such permission cannot be given, however, if the team requesting the goalkeeper substitution has used its maximum number of substitutions under the rules of competition. If the substitution is allowed and occurs during the execution phase, the replacement goalkeeper assumes the kicking status of the goalkeeper for whom he or she substituted.

K.3 When to Implement the Reduce to Equate Requirement

Referees are advised to note at the start of the preparation phase any imbalance in the number of eligible players between the two teams but to wait to a point closer to the start of the execution phase before actually implementing the reduce to equate requirement in order to account more efficiently for the possibility that one or more players may become ineligible during the preparation phase.

K.4 Choice of a Goal

The decision as to which goal to use belongs solely to the referee. Factors to consider include the relative condition of each goal, the condition of the area of the field between the penalty mark and the front of each goal, the direction of the sun, and the nature of the area directly behind each goal. Once selected and the first kick taken, the goal used cannot be changed for the remainder of the process unless the goal becomes unusable or the condition of the field in front of the goal becomes dangerous. Referees are advised that, if changing the goal is necessary, every effort should be made to delay making the change until after the two teams have kicked an equal number of times.

K.5 Retaking a Kick from the Mark

Any kick from the mark which the referee orders retaken can be performed by another player, provided that the other player has not already kicked in the current round. The original kicker is not charged with a kick and could therefore take a kick in the current round.

K.6 The Center Circle

Guidelines for the kicks from the mark process provide only that all eligible players except for the current kicker and each goalkeeper be in the center circle. However, U.S. Soccer recommends that, where player or game control issues warrant, the referee should require that these players occupy separate sides of the center circle to prevent contact between the teams and to facilitate the ability of the assistant referee assigned to this area to monitor the behavior of these players.

K.7 The Kicking Order of the Eligible Players

The Laws of the Game require only that no player charged with a kick can kick again in the current round. Accordingly, there is neither a need for nor any benefit in asking for a list indicating the order of kickers nor should any such list be accepted if offered. The eligible players can at any time prior to leaving the center circle to take a kick decide among themselves which one will be next. The officiating team, individually and collectively, is responsible for ensuring that this critical rule is not overlooked or violated.

K.8 Referee Can Declare a Player Ineligible

Once the execution phase begins, a player who had been determined to be eligible to participate in the kicks from the mark process can be declared ineligible by the referee if that player refuses to participate or is absent and cannot be located when called upon to take the final kick in the current round (all other eligible players on that team having already kicked). Full details must be included in the match report. Because the execution phase has begun, the reduce to equate requirement would not apply.

K.9 Similarities in the Taking of Penalty Kicks and Kicks from the Penalty Mark

Except where specifically modified by the Kicks from the Penalty Mark process, the guidelines in 14.3, 14.5, and 14.10 apply equally to both types of kicks.

Infringement ¹ committed by	Outcome of the kick from the mark	
	Ball goes into goal	Ball does not go into goal
No infringement	Next kick from the mark ²	Next kick from the mark ²
Kicker	Retake kick from the mark	Next kick from the mark ²
Goalkeeper	Next kick from the mark ²	Retake kick from the mark
Kicker and goalkeeper	Retake kick from the mark	Retake kick from the mark

¹Refers to the actions by the kicker and/or defending goalkeeper which are covered in Law 14 regarding requirements for a valid penalty kick.

²Means that the kick was valid, despite the infringement, and the next kick should be taken unless the kick just taken makes any further kick from the mark unnecessary.

The Fourth Official

F.1 Uniform and Equipment

Because the fourth official may be called upon to serve as the referee or an assistant referee, depending on circumstances and local rules of competition, he or she must wear the proper uniform and have available the same items of equipment expected of a referee.

F.2 Area of Responsibility

Given the specific responsibilities assigned to the fourth official during the match, he or she should establish a location near the halfway line on the same side of the field as the technical areas or team benches. This is also where the extra game balls may be kept which the fourth official supervises. No formal requirement governs the ability of the fourth official to move within or outside this area but it is generally accepted that the fourth official does not move far from this central location between the team benches unless drawn to the left or right to manage more effectively behavior by persons in a technical area. While a table and chair may be provided, it is also generally expected that the fourth official remains standing during the match. The table should be used while processing any needed documents.

F.3 Delegated Responsibilities

The fourth official is often tasked by the referee with inspecting the condition of any player ordered from the field for bleeding, having blood on the uniform, or having defective equipment. Where this is the case, the referee must provide in the pregame discussion clear guidance on how this will be indicated to the fourth official, what the referee will consider acceptable solutions for these issues, and how the fourth official will communicate to the referee that the inspection has occurred before the player is allowed to return to the field with the permission of the referee.

The referee might likewise delegate to the fourth official the responsibility to perform the initial inspection of the credentials, uniform, and equipment of late-arriving players.

F.4 Communications Channel

The fourth official serves as the main channel of communication between the referee and team officials, stadium security staff, representatives of the competition authority, and telecommunications personnel with the objective of resolving as many issues as possible under the general instructions of the referee.