



**A**  
**Soccer**  
**Guide**  
**For**  
**Parents**

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## WHY THIS BOOKLET?

Soccer is the most widely played sport throughout the world, but it has only recently become popular in America. It is a great sport for players and spectators alike, but a lot of spectators, especially parents of young players, don't know much about the game. Most adults grew up playing baseball, football, and basketball, so they know these games well; however, soccer was not so popular in America several decades ago, and most adults today did not play soccer as kids. Hopefully, this booklet will help your understanding of soccer, so you can better enjoy the game along with your child.

The idea for the booklet came from Know Soccer and Its Rules, by Stanley Lover, published by Soccer Learning Systems, San Ramon, California, but the actual material was drawn from a number of sources. ***The Florence Soccer Association originally put together the information for their soccer club, and Vienna Youth Soccer thanks them for their permission in allowing VYS to publish it for our parents.*** Most information came from the FSA booklet, and information pertinent to VYS has been added.

We hope you take the time to read this entire booklet to learn more about the game of soccer, and refer to it during the year. It includes explanation of the 17 Laws of Soccer and a glossary of soccer terms. It is not meant to educate parents in order for you to second-guess referees or coaches, but to learn about the Laws of soccer to help their child understand them, and to be able to help your child have a more enjoyable soccer experience.

If you have any questions about the game of soccer, or anything in this booklet, please notify the VYS Administrator, at Admin@vys.org, and she will forward your question(s) to the appropriate person so it can be answered.

## ***A Brief History of the Game***

"Football-like" games were played in ancient China, Greece, South America and by the Celts of the British Isles. These early games often had ties to pagan ceremonies or the training of warriors for battle.

The first balls were leather bags stuffed with hair or rags. They were heavy and not exactly "round", but this was OK for a game that included the use of hands and feet and that was played in a very rough manner. There were few rules, and what rules there were varied from country to country and region to region.

In the 1860's and 1870's a group of men in London began to develop a more "gentlemanly" game called Association Football to distinguish it from rugby and other such games. The Association members were from exclusive English schools and their game reflected their social class and upbringing. The first league was formed in England in 1888 and by 1900 the game had become very popular.

The term "soccer" comes from the word "association" with the "er" added to parallel the term "rugger" which referred to the game of rugby. This more refined game required better, lighter balls that were more easily produced with the coming of the Industrial Revolution. The game was exported around the world by British soldiers, sailors, priests and traders. It became especially popular in South America and throughout Europe.

Considering the number of people playing the game and the number of countries with teams and leagues, soccer is now the most popular sport in the world. The game and the rules are now administered by the Fédération International de Football Association, or F.I.F.A., which is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. Each country in which the game is played has its own national organization as well. In the United States it is the United States Soccer Federation or USSF. Within the USSF are regional, state and local associations. The Florence Soccer Association is affiliated with the South Carolina Youth Soccer Association (SCYSA).

It's great to know that regardless of where it is played, the rules and the game remain essentially the same.

## ***Suggestions for Parents***

Here are a few suggestions for helping your child get the most from the game of soccer. Credit for much of this goes to the New Hampshire Soccer Association's Internet web site.

**See that your child has their own soccer ball.** All children playing soccer should have their own ball at home, if possible. They need time to practice on their own what they learn from their coaches. Be sure the ball is the proper size for their age. Soccer balls do come in different sizes, sizes 5, 4, and 3, being the smallest ball. They should bring their own balls to practice, too. It is much easier for the coach if every player has a ball to use in practice sessions.

**Encourage neighborhood play.** Encourage your child to play soccer with their friends. If there isn't any other interested kids in the neighborhood, play yourself. At least this will give you a better understanding of how hard it can be to kick the ball where you want it to go!

**Let the coaches do the coaching.** Parents may not know exactly what the coach expects from the team nor what the coach may have told the players. The players don't want to be yelled at what to do from the sidelines by parents and other spectators. It can be very distracting.

**Support your child.** Be your child's biggest fan. Congratulate them when they play well, and encourage them when their performance is less than stellar. If your child has come off the field when their team has lost, but they have played their best, help them see this as a "win." The focus should be on doing their best while always getting better, not on the results of a single game.

**Support the team.** Remember that your child's teammates are not the opponents. If they are playing better than your child, then your child will have a wonderful opportunity to learn from them. If your child is the top performer on the team, encourage them to help their teammates, and neither you nor your child should criticize the other team members. Soccer is a team game. There are very few players who can control the game by themselves. When something bad happens, it is rarely one player's fault. . . same when something good happens!

**Support the program.** Get involved -- VOLUNTEER! There are lots of things to do. Be a coach, an assistant coach, coaches aide, team parent, field prep coordinator, referee coordinator. Check to see what positions are open on the VYS board. Take classes and become a referee, with you child. Most soccer clubs require a lot of volunteer effort, and that is true for VYS. The more parents we have volunteer, the better the program. The more you put into the program, the more your child will get out of it. To volunteer, please Email the Administrator at Admin@vys, and she will let you know the volunteer positions that are open.

**Understand and exhibit appropriate behavior.** This is especially important for games. Shout encouragement to all the players. Acknowledge good play on both teams. Certainly don't "boo" the other team! Be careful about shouting tactical directions -- leave this to the coaches. Getting directions from many sources will confuse and distract the players.

**Don't be overly critical of the referees.** Things look quite different on the field of play than from the sidelines. Sometimes the refs have a better view; sometimes the spectators do. The refs are doing the best they can, and even though they will make occasional mistakes, most refs know the rules better than the spectators, and vociferous criticism really will not help the situation. If the players think they are not getting a fair shake from the officials, play can rapidly degenerate and the game itself suffers. An occasional reaction to a call is inevitable, but constantly complaining about the referee's calls will distract the players from what they need to concentrate on, playing their game the best they can.

**Keep soccer in perspective for both your child and yourself.** As important as the game may be for your child, there are other equally important things: family, friends, school, church, etc. Help your child keep a balance. Same goes for the parents -- soccer should not be larger than life for you. Remember, soccer is supposed to be fun!

**So Have Fun!** The game must be fun for both the kids and the parents. If not, it will be hard for either to stick with it. The challenges the kids overcome on the soccer field will help them throughout life. Help them take advantage of this opportunity by keeping their involvement with the game a fun experience for all!

## **The Laws of the Game -- A Simplified Explanation**

The rules for the game of soccer are contained in The Laws of the Game written and updated each year by FIFA. The rules are divided into 17 "Laws". Below are the high points of each Law. You can find a complete copy of the Laws in booklet form at most soccer stores or you can download them from the Internet (see the last section of this booklet).

### **Law 1 - The Field of Play**

Soccer fields are always rectangular, although the size of the field can vary widely by location and age group. "Full sized" fields are from 100 - 130 yards long and from 50 - 100 yards wide.

The field has distinctive markings which have special names. These markings help guide the actions of the players and the referees.

The two longer sides of the field are the **touch lines**. The two short ends of the field are the **goal lines**. A **halfway line** is drawn between the touch lines to divide the field in half.

A **goal** is centered on each goal line. The goal consists of two upright **goal posts** and a **crossbar**. There may be a net on the goal, but this is not required. Goal posts and a crossbar are required.

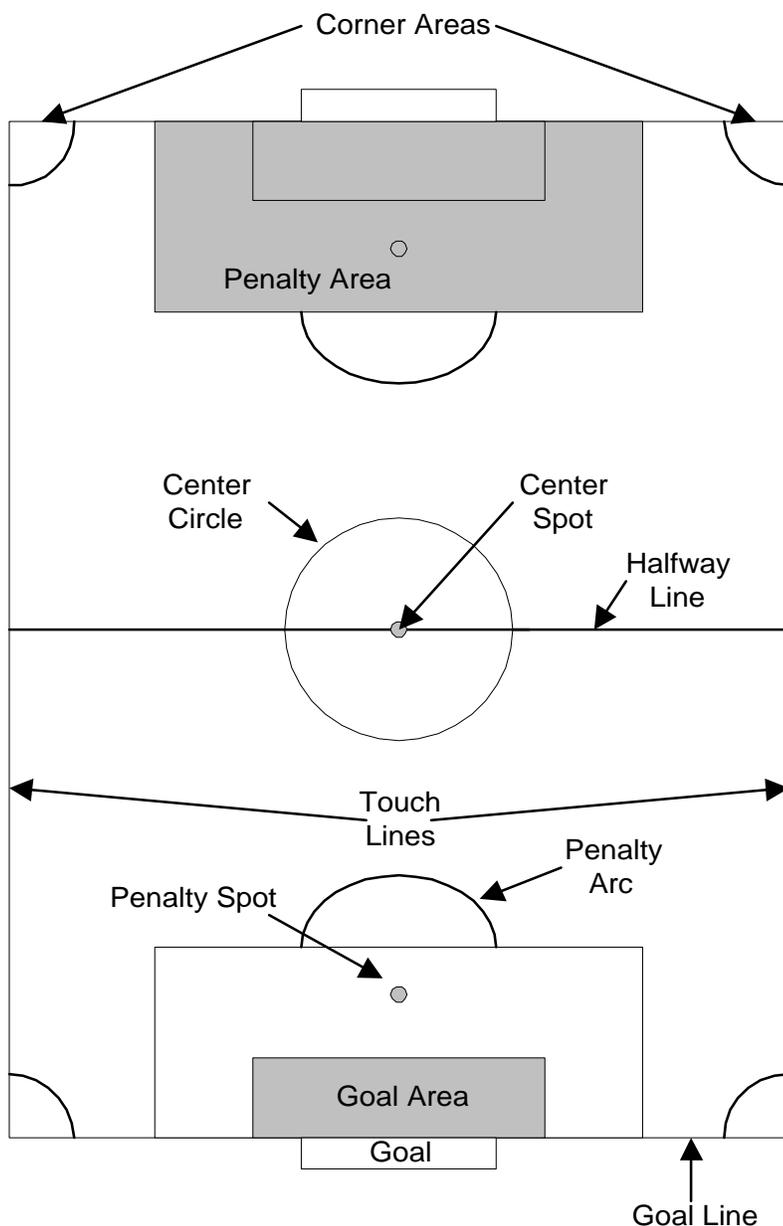
Two rectangles are drawn out from the goal lines in front of each goal. The small rectangle is the **goal area**. The large rectangle is the **penalty area**.

A **penalty spot** is marked 12-yards from the goal line and centered between the goal posts. A **penalty arc** is marked outside the penalty area at a 10-yard radius from the penalty spot.

At the center of the halfway line is the **center mark**. The **center circle** is drawn around the center mark.

A small quarter arc is drawn around each corner of the field. These mark the **corner areas**. A **corner flag** or **corner pylon** marks each corner of the field.

The areas of the field and the markings are shown on the diagram in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1 Soccer Field Markings**

### Law 2 - The Ball

This Law specifies the size, weight and pressure required for balls in international game play. Smaller balls are used for younger players. Three different size balls are used.

Balls are usually covered with stitched panels made of leather or plastic. The referees and coaches should check the balls to make sure panels are not missing or loose, which can cause cuts if a player is hit with the ball.

For a game, the referee checks that the ball is the proper size for the age playing, that it is properly inflated and is not "egg-shaped". Players sitting on balls can cause them to get out-of-round. An out-of-round ball will wobble as it rolls or flies through the air, making it difficult for the players to control the ball.

### Law 3 - The Number of Players

The game is played by two teams of not more than 11 players. Fewer than 11 players are used in the younger ages and fewer than 11 can be used by mutual consent of the teams.

One player from each team must be designated as the **goalkeeper**. The goalkeepers have special privileges and special rules apply to them.

Substitutes can come into the game only when play has been stopped for some reason and they must wait at the halfway line until the referee has signaled them to come on.

### Law 4 - Players Equipment

Basic equipment for all players consists of:

- a jersey or shirt
- shorts
- socks
- shinguards
- shoes.

Since the goalkeepers have special privileges, the goalkeeper on each team must wear a shirt or jersey that distinguishes him from the other players and from the referee.

Shinguards are important since players get accidentally kicked a lot! Shinguards must be worn *inside* the socks. Soccer socks are extra long since the socks must *completely* cover the shinguards.

The referee checks before the game that the players are not wearing anything which might cause injury to themselves or to another player. Items such as earrings, watches, bracelets, necklaces, and hard or sharp barrettes are not allowed. *Safety of the players is always the most important rule.*

Players must also wear shoes of some kind. Soccer shoes have small studs on the bottom which keep the players' feet from slipping. For safety, the shoes cannot have sharp or extra long studs or cleats. Baseball or football shoes are not allowed.

### Law 5 - Referees

The referee is the VIP in a soccer game. He is delegated almost total control of the game.

Some of his powers include:

- checking and approving the field, all equipment and the game ball
- stopping or canceling the game if necessary
- being the official timekeeper
- being sure the rules of the game are followed
- taking whatever disciplinary action is necessary if players are guilty of misconduct
- stopping play if a player is seriously injured
- restarting the game when it has been stopped for any reason
- supervising the conduct of coaches, spectators and other officials.

The rules of soccer are very clear: **Decisions of the referee are final.** Players, coaches and spectators should not argue with the referees. Players can be ejected from the game for arguing with a referees decisions! This is an important distinction between soccer and other sports where arguing with officials is a normal occurrence.

### Law 6 - The Assistant Referees

Because the soccer field is so large and because play is mostly continuous, there are two assistant referees assigned to a game to help the main, or **center ref**.

Assistant referees have three main duties:

- help the referee determine when the ball has gone out of the field and which team should be awarded possession of the ball
- watch for **offside** plays

- watch for fouls which the referee can't see.

The assistant referees stay just outside the touch lines and signal to the referee with flags. Usually there is one assistant on each side of the field and usually each assistant watches one end of the field.

The center referee will usually take the advice of the assistants when they see a foul, but can overrule them if he wishes.

### **Law 7 - The Duration of the Match**

This Law says that there must be two equal periods of 45 minutes each. It also says that shorter periods may be used if agreed to in advance by the teams, but each period must be the same length.

The players are allowed a break between periods but the break cannot exceed 15 minutes.

**Like the field and ball sizes, the length of a game depends on the age of the players.**

There are no "time outs" in soccer and play is continuous except when the ball goes out of bounds or the referee stops play for a foul, injury or some other reason.

The referee may decide to add some extra time to a period for time lost due to injuries, substitutions or chasing loose balls. Usually this will only be a minute or two and often the referee will add no time at all.

### **Law 8 - The Start and Restart of Play**

The game always begins with a coin toss to see which team will attack which goal and which team will get first possession of the ball. The team winning the toss selects the goal they will attack in the first period. Teams change ends at the half.

For the kick-off, players have to be on their own side of the halfway line.

The ball is placed on the center mark and the team *losing* the toss is awarded the first kick-off. The team which *wins* the toss takes the kick-off in the second half.

Unlike football, the teams do not have to kick the ball to the other team on a kick-off, but try to keep possession by kicking to a member of their own team. The kick-off has to go forward, however, so the defenders have to stay outside the center circle until the ball is kicked, giving the attacking team time to get players into position to receive the ball.

The player making the kick-off cannot touch the ball again until after it has been touched by another player.

The kick-off is used to start the game and to start each additional period. It is also used after a goal is scored. After a goal, the team not scoring the goal is awarded the kick-off.

A goal can be scored directly from a kick-off, but this would be very unlikely except for in the very young age groups where the field is much shorter.

### **Law 9 - The Ball In and Out of Play**

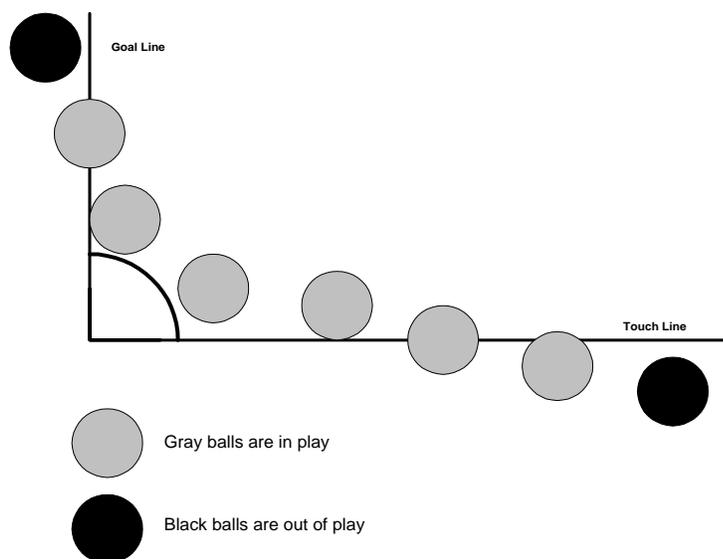
The ball is in play at all times unless:

- it has gone out of the field over either a touch line or a goal line
- the referee has stopped play (usually with his whistle) for some reason.

The ball remains in play if it hits the goal post or corner flag and rebounds onto the field, provided it has not passed completely over the touch line or the goal line.

The same is true for hitting the referee or one of the assistant referees. As long as the ball has not passed completely over the touch line or the goal line it is still in play.

Note that the ball has to be **completely** over the line to be out of play. This is a very important rule and is illustrated in the diagram below:



**Fig. 2 Balls in and out of play**

The ball does not have to touch the ground to be out of play. It goes out of play in the air if it passes over the touch line or goal line. It can even go out of play and curve back into play in the air. The assistant referees watch the lines very closely to catch this. If the ball goes out of play, the assistant immediately raises his flag to signal the referee even though the players may still be playing the ball.

The position of the ball determines whether it is out of play, not the position of the players. The players can be completely outside the lines and still play a ball. Spectators should stand at least two yards from the touch lines and should **never** pick up or kick a ball unless it is **clearly** out of play!

### Law 10 - The Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the **whole** ball crosses into the goal, provided the attacking team has not committed any infringement of the rules. Just as with balls over the touch line, the **whole** ball has to be over the **whole** goal line in order for a goal to be scored.

A team can score a goal against itself – called an **own-goal** – if one of their players accidentally puts the ball into their own goal. A goalkeeper can accidentally back up into the goal while holding the ball and score a goal for the other team!

The referee and his assistants have to watch very closely to determine whether a goal has been scored. The ball may be in the goal then bounce back out onto the field; in this case a goal **will** be scored. Sometimes the ball will be in the goal, but the referee will not allow the goal because some infraction has occurred.

It possible to score directly from a kick-off or from a goal kick, although this would be very unlikely – and no own-goals can be scored from a kick-off or goal kick.

### Law 11 - Offside

A player is judged to be offside – on the wrong side of the ball – if he is nearer to his opponent's goal than the ball is, *unless*

- he is in his own end of the field,
- there are at least two defenders between him and their goal line,
- he is not involved in or inferring with the play.

The judgment by the referee and the assistants is made **at the moment a ball is played toward** the player who is offside, **not when the player receives the ball!** This is very important rule that is often misunderstood.

When a player is called offside, the other team is awarded the ball with an indirect free kick.

Note that the proper term is "**offside**", not "**off-sides**".

See the section below, **More on Offside**, for a more thorough discussion of this law.

## Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

The rules about fouls are intended to provide for a safe and fair game for the players.

There are minor or technical fouls such as offside, dangerous play, or impeding an opponent that are penalized with an indirect free kick for the opponents.

Major (or “penal”) fouls include kicking, tripping, holding, pushing or charging an opponent in a manner considered by the referee to be “careless, reckless or using excessive force.” Using the hands or arms to control the ball is also considered a major offense. These are penalized by a direct free kick for the opponents.

Misconduct such as unsporting behavior or persistent infringement of the rules may also result in a **caution** to the player. The referee will show the player a **yellow card** and record the player’s number in the official record of the game.

Players guilty of violent conduct, serious foul play, insulting language to a referee or other players, or guilty of a second yellow card offense will be shown a **red card** and dismissed from the game. If a player is dismissed his team will not be allowed a substitution and must play a player short for the remainder of the game. If the goalkeeper is dismissed, the team may appoint another player as goalkeeper, but still has to play a player short for the rest of the game.

There are specific fouls which apply to the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper cannot

- handle the ball outside his own penalty area
- waste time by holding the ball more than 5 - 6 seconds before returning it to play
- handle a ball deliberately kicked to him by a teammate
- handle a ball thrown directly to him by a teammate from a throw-in.

## Law 13 - Free Kicks

Free kicks are awarded as penalties for rule infractions. The kick is taken from the place where the foul or infraction occurred.

A free kick may be either direct or indirect. A goal may be scored directly from a **direct free kick** without being played by another player.

With an **indirect free kick**, at least one other player (of either team) must touch the ball before a goal can be scored. The referee will indicate an indirect free kick by raising his hand in the air and keeping it raised until the kick is taken and the ball is touched by another player.

With all free kicks, the opponents must stay at least 10 yards from the ball until it is kicked – this is what makes it a “free” kick... it is free from obstruction.

## Law 14 - The Penalty Kick

If a player commits a major (or “penal”) foul – one which would result in a direct free kick – within his own penalty area, the opponents are awarded a **penalty kick**.

The ball is placed on the penalty spot, which is 12 yards from the goal line and centered between the goalposts. All players except the kicker and the goalkeeper must stay outside the penalty area until the kick is taken.

The goalkeeper can move along the goal line but cannot move out toward the ball until it is kicked.

The referee signals for the kick to be taken. The kicker cannot play the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player.

A penalty kick results in a goal at least 80% of the time so players have to be extremely careful not to commit fouls in their penalty area.

## Law 15 - The Throw-In

When a player kicks the ball out of play over the touch line, the ball is returned to play by the other team with a **throw-in**.

The player making the throw-in must:

- keep both feet on the ground
- have a part of each foot either on or outside the touch line
- take the ball behind his head with both hands
- throw the ball in from over his head using both hands.

If these steps are not followed exactly, the referee will signal that the throw-in was not proper and will award the throw-in to the other team.

For younger players, the referee may allow the player to retake a throw-in if it was not properly taken

The player taking the throw-in cannot play the ball again until it has been played by another player.

### **Law 16 - The Goal Kick**

If the attacking team kicks the ball over the goal line outside the goal – that is, they do not score a goal – then the defending team puts the ball back into play with a **goal kick**.

The ball is placed anywhere within the goal area and kicked back into play. All the opponents must stay outside the penalty area until the kick is taken. The ball must travel outside the penalty area before it is in play and before it can be touched by another player. If not, the kick is retaken.

The player taking the goal kick cannot play the ball again until it has been touched by another player.

A goal can be scored directly from a goal kick (but an **own-goal** cannot be scored from a goal kick).

### **Law 17 - The Corner Kick**

If the defending team kicks the ball over its own goal line (outside the goal itself), then the attacking team puts the ball back into play with a **corner kick**.

The ball is placed in the corner arc on the side of the goal where the ball went out. An attacking player kicks the ball back into play from the corner arc. The ball is in play as soon as it is kicked and moves.

The opponents must stay at least 10 yards away from the ball until it is kicked.

The player taking the corner kick cannot play the ball again until it is touched by another player.

A goal can be scored directly from a corner kick.

### **A Note about Fouls**

There used to be a line in the Laws stating “Football being a tough, combative sport – where the contest to gain possession of the ball should nonetheless be fair and gentlemanly – any such moves, even when really vigorous, must be allowed by the referee.” (This quote has been left out of recent versions of the Laws, but the intent is still there.) What this implies is that

- soccer **is** a contact sport, and
- a considerable amount of pushing and shoving are to be expected and are allowed under the rules of the game.

Each time a player is pushed, trips or falls, there is not necessarily a foul. Law 12 states specifically that a foul is to be called for being “careless, reckless or using excessive force.” The referee must use his experience and judgment as to whether the challenge, even though “vigorous”, was “fair and gentlemanly.”

As noted above in the Laws on referees and their assistants, there is tremendous authority – and responsibility – invested in these game officials. It is practically impossible for an official to make calls that are universally popular with the players and the spectators. But in the end, it is only the referee’s vision and judgment that count. As parents and fans, we often see the play with slightly biased eyes!

## ***Glossary of soccer terms***

Here are some special soccer terms that are used in the rules or to describe play.

**Advantage Rule** - The referee can choose to not stop play for an infraction if doing so would give an advantage to the team committing the foul. For instance, if a defender is holding an attacker who has the ball but the attacker pulls away and runs toward the goal, stopping the play to deal with the holding foul would shift the advantage from the attacking to the defending team. The referee can choose to let the play continue and see what happens. If no shot on goal results in a few seconds or if the attacker's "advantage" disappears, the referee can stop play, go back to the spot of the holding foul, and award the attacking team a free kick. This is like the "delayed penalty" call in hockey.

**Assistant Referee** - One of two assistants to the referee who stand along the touch lines to watch for balls out of play, offside players and fouls that occur out of the referee's sight.

**Booking** - When the referee writes a player's number in his "book", or game record, following a caution or ejection. See "Yellow Card" and "Red Card".

**Caution** - An official warning to a player that he has committed serious misconduct. Referees will issue a caution to a player if he

- enters or leaves the game without the permission of the referee,
- persistently infringes the Laws of the Game,
- shows by word or action dissent from any decision given by the referee
- is guilty of Unsporting Behavior.

He is shown a Yellow Card by the referee and if he commits another cautionable offense, he will be sent off the field and his team will be a player short for the rest of the game.

**Center Circle** - A 10-yard circle drawn around the Center Mark. Opponents of the team taking a kick-off must stay outside this circle until the kick-off is taken.

**Center Mark** - The center of the field, marked at the center of the Halfway Line.

**Center Referee** - The referee in charge of a game. He is the only official actually on the field of play. The Assistant Referees stay outside the touch lines.

**Charging** - Pushing a player shoulder to shoulder. Charging is legal provided

- the player does not use excessive force,
- it is really shoulder to shoulder without arms or elbows involved,
- it is not from behind,
- both players are within playing distance of the ball, that is within about 2 strides.

**Corner Area** - The area encompassed by the goal line, the touch line and the corner arc. Used to mark the area from which corner kicks are taken.

**Corner Arc** - A 1-yard quarter circle drawn around the corners of the field to mark out the corner area.

**Corner Flag** - A flag or pylon used to mark the corners of the field. The corner flag or pylon cannot be moved (or removed) when taking a corner kick.

**Corner Kick** - Restart awarded to the attacking team when the defense plays the ball over their own goal line (outside their own goal). The ball is placed inside the corner arc and kicked into the field of play. The opponents are required to stay at least 10-yards from the ball until it is kicked. The kicker may not play the ball again until it is played by another player. The corner flag or pylon cannot be moved (or removed) when taking a corner kick.

**Cross** (the ball) - To kick the ball toward the front of the goal from the side of the field in hopes that a teammate can kick or head the ball into the goal.

**Crossbar** - The horizontal bar at the top of the goal. It sits on top of the goal posts.

**Dangerous Play** - A technical offense, such as a player trying to play the ball after he has fallen to the ground (when other players are around ) or a high kick at the ball, which might be dangerous to other players. Penalized by an indirect free kick for the opponents.

**Defenders** - Players on a team who play closest to their own goal and whose primary responsibility is to stop the attacking players of the other team. Also called “fullbacks” or just “backs”.

**Direct Free Kick** - A free kick from which a goal can be scored directly without another player having to touch the ball.

**Dismissal** - Same as Sending Off.

**Dribble** - Playing or advancing the ball by short kicks, usually while running down the field.

**Dropped Ball** - A restart used after the game has been stopped for a reason other than an offense by a player – such as to see to an injured player. The referee drops the ball, usually between two opposing players, at the point where the ball was when the game was stopped. The ball is in play when it hits the ground. While the drop is normally between two players, it is not necessary for *any* player to be in the area when the referee drops the ball.

**Encroachment** - Failing to respect the required distance from a free kick, or entering the penalty area before a penalty kick has been taken.

**Far Post** - The goal post farthest from the ball.

**F.I.F.A.** - The Fédération International de Football Association. The international body based in Zurich, Switzerland, that administers the game of soccer and its rules throughout the world.

**Forward** - Player on a team whose primary responsibility is to attack and take shots at the opponents' goal. Normally the forwards play farthest downfield towards the opponents' goal. Forwards may be “center forwards” or “wing forwards” depending on where they play most of the time. One or more forwards may also be called “strikers”. See “**Midfielders**” and “**Defenders**”.

**Fourth Official** - In college or international games a fourth official may be used to help with substitutions and to be available to replace one of the other officials who becomes injured or otherwise unable to continue the game.

**Free Kick** - A restart following a foul in which the fouled team is allowed to kick the ball with the opponents required to stay at least 10 yards away until the ball is kicked.

**Fullbacks/Backs** - Same as defenders.

**Goal Area** - Small rectangle extending 6 yards from either side of the goal and 6 yards out from the goal line. Marks the area from which Goal Kicks are taken.

**Goal Box** - Same as Goal Area.

**Goal Kick** - Restart used after the attacking team has played the ball over the goal line outside the goal itself. The ball is placed within the Goal Area (or usually on the line outlining the Goal Area) and must be kicked out of the Penalty Area before being played by another player. Opponents must be outside the Penalty Area when the kick is taken.

**Goal Line** - Either of the two shorter end lines of the field.

**Goal Posts** - The two uprights forming the goal. The crossbar sits on top of the goal posts.

**Goalkeeper** - One player specifically designated from each team. The only player that can handle the ball on the field. Restricted to handling the ball only within his own Penalty Area. Goalkeepers can play outside their Penalty Areas but must not handle the ball. Goalkeepers are identified by jerseys which distinguish them from other players and from the referee.

**Halfbacks** - Same as Midfielders.

**Halfway Line** - Line used to divide the field into two equal ends. Marked across the field between the Touch Lines.

**Handball** - When a player uses his hand or arm to control the ball, which is a penal foul. The rule of thumb often used is that if the player moves his hand to contact the ball – even if he is protecting himself – it is a foul. If the ball accidentally hits the player's hand or arm with the player making no arm movement, it is not a foul. “Hand-to-ball = foul; ball-to-hand = no foul.”

**Header** - To play the ball with the head.

**Impeding** (an opponent's progress) – Obstructing an opponent when not within playing distance of the ball.

**Indirect Free Kick** - A free kick from which a goal cannot be scored without the ball being touched by another player. The referee signals an indirect kick by holding his hand in the air until a second player has touched the ball.

**Juggling** - Bouncing the ball off the foot, thigh, chest or head without letting it touch the ground.

**Laws of the Game** - The official rule book for international soccer, written and updated each year by F.I.F.A.

**Linesman** - Older term for Assistant Referee. This term was changed in 1996.

**Mark/Mark Up** - To guard closely an opponent without the ball so that he cannot receive or play the ball easily.

**Midfielders** - Players on a team who play between the forwards and the defenders. Also call "halfbacks". These players are responsible for both supporting both the attackers and the defenders. Players may be referred to as "center mids" or "outside mids" depending on where they play most of the time.

**Near Post** - The goal post nearest to the ball.

**Nutmeg** - To move the ball past an opponent by passing the ball between the opponent's legs – very embarrassing for the opponent!

**Obstruction** - Same as impeding. Obstruction is the older term. The new Laws of the Game use the term impeding.

**Offside Position** - A player is in an "offside position" if he is nearer the opponents' goal line than the ball is unless

- there are two defenders between (or level with) the player and the goal line, or
- the player is in his own end of the field.

It is not an offense to be in an offside position provided the player is not actively involved with the play.

**Offside** - It is an offense to be in an offside position if a teammate passes the ball to (or in the direction of) the offside player. The referee and the assistant referees must judge whether the player in the offside position is either

- seeking an advantage by his position, or
- interfering with play or with an opponent.

The judgment is made when the pass is made, not when the player actually receives the ball. Offside calls are often the most complained about calls made by the referee.

Usually the Assistant Referee is in the best position to judge an offside player. He signals the referee by raising his flag straight up and holding it until the referee whistles for a stoppage of play. When the Referee stops the play, the Assistant will point with his flag to the position on the field where the offside player was.

If play is stopped for an offside call, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick.

**Offside Trap** - When defenders move quickly away from their goal to try to catch their opponents in offside positions. This is a clever ploy when it works. If it does not work, it can leave attackers an easy path to the goal!

**Overlap** - When a player – usually a defender or mid-fielder – runs ahead of or outside his teammates to press the attack and tries to catch the defense off guard.

**Own Goal** - When a team accidentally plays the ball into their own goal. A score is counted for the opponents.

**Penal Foul** - A foul that results in a direct free kick (or penalty kick) for the opponents. These include tripping, kicking, holding, pushing or striking an opponent; jumping at an opponent; tackling or charging in a careless or reckless manner; handling the ball (except the goalkeeper in his own penalty area) or spitting at an opponent.

**Penalty Arc** - An arc drawn outside the penalty area at a 10-yard radius from the penalty spot. When a penalty kick is being taken, no player can be inside this arc except the kicker. This is to enforce the rule that all players must be 10-yards away from a free kick which includes a penalty kick. Since the back of the penalty box is closer than 10 yards to the penalty spot, this arc must be drawn to show the players where they may stand during the penalty kick.

**Penalty Area** - A rectangle marked 18-yards out from either goal post and 18-yards out from the goal line. Any major fouls – fouls which would normally result in a direct free kick – committed by a team in its own penalty area result in a Penalty Kick for the opponents. The Penalty Area also marks the area in which a goalkeeper can use his hands to catch or block the ball.

**Penalty Kick** - A restart awarded to a team that is fouled inside the opponents' penalty area when a direct free kick would normally be awarded. For a penalty kick, only the kicker and the goalkeeper may be inside the penalty area. All other players must stay outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the kick is taken. The goalkeeper must

stand along the goal line and not move out toward the ball until it is kicked. Penalty Kicks result in a goal at least 80% of the time.

**Penalty Spot** - The spot from which a Penalty Kick is taken. It is marked 12 yards out from the goal line and centered between the goal posts.

**Pitch** - English or European term for a soccer field.

**Push Up/Push Out** - When the defenders move out toward midfield to force the attackers to move away from their goal or risk being called offside.

**Red Card** - A small red card held up to a player to show the player, coach and spectators that the player has been ejected (or "sent off") from the game. When a player is "red carded", his team must play a player short for the remainder of the game. A player who is ejected from a game may be required to serve a suspension from future game(s) as well.

**Restart** - Any of the methods of putting the ball back into play after play has been stopped. Examples include the throw-in, free kick, kick-off and dropped ball.

**Sending Off** - A player who is "sent off" is shown a Red Card and ejected from the game. Offenses warranting ejection include:

- violent conduct
- serious foul play
- use of insulting or abusive language
- spitting at an opponent, teammate or official
- being guilty of a second cautionable offense.

**Set Piece/Set Play** - A specially rehearsed play, usually occurring on a restart and designed to get a clear shot on goal. Because play is stopped for the restart, players can get into set positions and be prepared to make specific moves to the ball.

**Sliding Tackle** - Sliding in feet-first to try to tackle the ball from an opponent. This can be dangerous and is often called a foul. The usual rule is that if the tackler contacts the ball first, then the tackle is considered a fair play. If the player subsequently trips over the tackler's legs, it is considered "incidental contact." If the tackler fails to contact the ball first, a foul is called. The referee may also call a foul if the tackle was violent, done in a reckless or dangerous manner (exposed cleats), or done from behind.

**Stopper** - Defender who normally marks the opposing striker or central forward.

**Striker** - An attacking player whose main responsibility is to try to score goals.

**Sweeper** - A defender who does not have a particular opponent to mark. Usually the last defender before the goalkeeper, he defends against any attackers who break through the other defenders.

**Switch** - To quickly move the ball from one side of the field to the other to try to catch the defense off guard.

**Tackle** - To take the ball away from an opponent. In soccer you tackle the ball, not the other player. Attempting to tackle the ball from behind is dangerous and usually is called a foul. See also "**Sliding Tackle**".

**Technical Area** - Area from which coaches are allowed to give tactical directions to their team on the field. Where seating is provided for the team and substitutes, the technical area is normally considered to be 1 meter on either side of the seating area and 1 meter from the touch line. The idea is that the coaches not be allowed to roam freely along the touch lines, but be confined to spaces around their "bench" area. In recreational play this is loosely interpreted by the referee and the assistant on the team side of the field. In no circumstance should a coach enter the field or cross the halfway line without permission of the referee. Standing or coaching from behind the goals is never allowed.

**Through Ball** - A ball played into open space, usually behind the defense, in hopes that a teammate can beat the opponents to the ball and press the attack.

**Throw-In** - A restart used when the ball has gone out of play over one of the touch lines. The team not last playing the ball before it went out gets to throw the ball back into the field. See the rules section under "**Law 15 - The Throw-In**".

**Touch Lines** - The long sidelines of the field. So called because in the early days of the game, the first player to "touch" the ball when it went out of play was allowed to throw it back into the field.

**Ungentlemanly Conduct** - Same as Unsporting Behavior. The term was changed in 1997 to reflect the increasing number of women and girls participating in the sport.

**Unsporting Behavior** - Any action that is an attempt to evade or circumvent the Laws of the Game or any action that is against the sporting spirit of the game. Examples include:

- leaning on the shoulder of a teammate in order to head the ball,
- jumping around in front of an opponent about to take a throw-in, and
- shouting at or calling to an opponent in an effort to distract him.

**Winger/Wing** - Players who play closest to the touch lines. Usually used to refer to forwards or midfielders, but may also be used to describe defenders as in “wing back”.

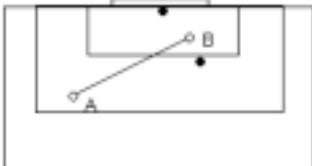
**Yellow Card** - A small yellow card held up to a player by the referee to show the player, coach and spectator that the player has been cautioned. When a yellow card is shown, the referee writes the player’s number in his record of the game so he will know that the player is to be ejected if he commits another cautionable offense. See “**Caution**”.

### **More on Offside**

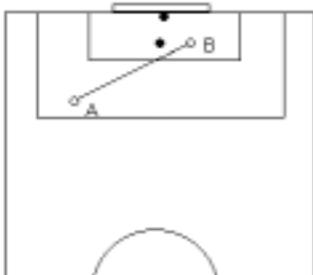
Offside is one of the hardest soccer rules to learn and sometimes one of the most difficult for the referees to call during a game.

The offside law in soccer (Law 11) is similar to offside rules in football and ice hockey and to the 3-second rule in basketball. The intent is to keep players from hanging around in front of the opponents’ goal hoping for an easy score.

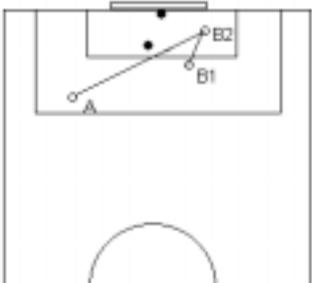
The following diagrams illustrate some of the various situations where the offside rule applies.



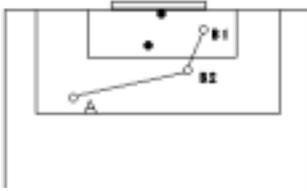
This is the most common offside call. Player B is in an offside position – in front of the ball and closer to the opponents’ goal line than the next to last defender – and Player A passes him the ball. The referee will call Player B offside and award a free kick to the black team.



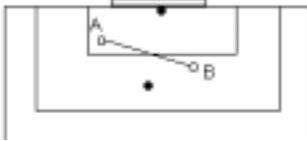
Here player B is not in an offside position because he is even with the next to last defender. He is **not closer** to the opponents’ goal line than at least two opponents.



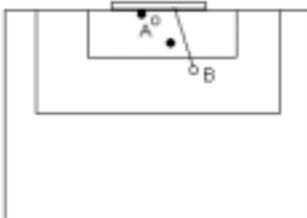
In the diagram at the left, Player B is in position B1 when Player A passes the ball, but runs to position B2 to receive the ball. Player B is not in an offside position **when the ball is passed** even though he runs behind the next to last defender to receive the ball. The determination of offside always depends on the player’s position when the ball is passed! Therefore Player B is **not** offside!



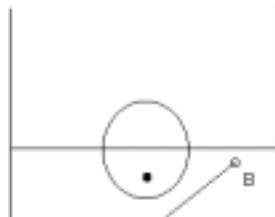
Here the situation is reversed from above. Player B is in an offside position (B1) when the ball is played by Player A and B will be called offside even though he receives the ball in an on-side position (B2). The call is always made based on the player's position **when the pass is made**. Therefore Player B is offside.



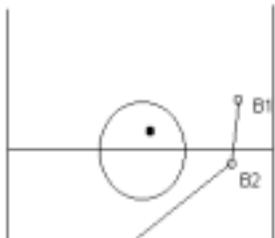
Here Player B is not in an offside position when Player A passes the ball because he is not closer to the goal line than the ball, even though he is behind the next to last defender. After passing the ball, Player A is in an offside position and must not interfere with play or **he** will be called offside!



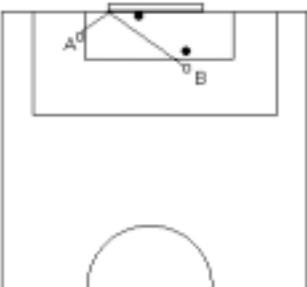
Here Player A **will** be called offside because he is clearly interfering with play by blocking the goalkeeper from the ball. This illustrates that a player may be called offside even if he is not the recipient of a pass and may not even touch the ball! The rule says a player in an offside position may not interfere with play and must not be "seeking to gain an advantage" by his offside position.



Here B is clearly on-side because he is in his own half of the field when A plays the ball, even though B may be behind the next to last defender. B may even receive the ball on the opponents' side of the field, provided he was on-side (in his own half of the field) when the pass from Player A is made.



In this case, Player B is in an offside position when he is at B1 (assuming the black player is the next to last defender) when A passes the ball and B will be called offside even though he receives the ball in his own half of the field.



Here B shoots the ball to the goal while Player A is in an offside position. Player A is not judged offside when the shot is taken because he is not directly involved in the play. When the ball rebounds to him from the goal post, however, he does become involved and will be called offside. Player A will also be called offside if the ball is deflected to him from the goalkeeper.

If a player receives the ball directly from an opponent's play – not simply a deflection off an opponent – the player will not usually be called offside. The referee has to judge that the opponent made a deliberate play of the ball and not that the ball deflected off the opponent without him having a chance to play the ball.

Finally, a player cannot be called offside if he receives a ball **directly** from a throw in, corner kick or goal kick even if he is in an offside position.

Where to find more information:

U.S. Youth Soccer	Soccer Learning Systems
899 Presidential Drive	P.O. Box 277
Suite 117	San Ramon, CA 94583
Richardson, TX 75082	<a href="http://www.soccervideos.com">www.soccervideos.com</a>
<a href="http://www.usysa.com">www.usysa.com</a>	

Eurosport	World of Soccer
431 US Highway 70A	P.O. Box 3628
East	Blaine, WA 98231-3628
Hillsborough, NC 27278	1-800-SOCCER-8
(800) 487-7253	<a href="http://www.worldofsoccer.com">www.worldofsoccer.com</a>
<a href="http://www.soccer.com">www.soccer.com</a>	

FIFA's Web Site  
[www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)

United States Soccer Federation (USSF) Web Site  
[www.us-soccer.com](http://www.us-soccer.com)

Virginia Youth Soccer Association  
[www.vysa.com](http://www.vysa.com)

Vienna Youth Soccer Web Site  
[www.vys.org](http://www.vys.org)

From the FIFA's web site, you can download the official copy of The Laws of the Game. Remember, this booklet is a simplified version to help parents and players gain a better understanding of the Laws.

Thank you for reading through the booklet. You may want to keep handy during the season for reference.