

FOOTBALL RULES

*Simplified
Laws of the Game*

ABOUT THESE RULES

Football, the world's most popular sport, has one of sport's smallest Law/rule books. However, like any rule book, The IFAB's official 'Laws of the Game' is very detailed and uses technical and sometimes complex language.

Consequently, many people who watch, play, coach, referee or report on the game have asked for a simpler version which gives a shorter but clear overall picture. Therefore, we created 'Football Rules', a reduced version of the official Laws of the Game. Whilst the Laws are mainly intended for referees, the Football Rules use simpler language and a different structure, to make the Laws easier to understand for everyone. Each Rule has a link to the corresponding sections in the Laws of the Game for those who want more information or the official wording.

The term 'rules' along with other terms used in this version (e.g. 'pitch' instead of 'field of play', penalty 'spot' instead of penalty 'mark' or 'penalties' instead of 'kicks from the penalty mark') were chosen to reflect widely used words and terms.

There is a simpler structure with a focus on 'what should happen?' and 'what happens if...' something takes place which is not expected or allowed.

One of football's key attractions is its simplicity. Hopefully, these Football Rules will provide an easier understanding and appreciation of the Laws for everyone, and will enhance the game's attractiveness for participants and spectators wherever they are in the world, and at whatever level of the game.

If you have any questions, they can be sent to: lawenquiries@thefab.com

Acknowledgements

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RULE CHANGES 2026/27 SUMMARY

Advantage

- The advantage can be played if a restart is incorrectly taken (e.g. a foul throw or the ball is moving at a free kick) and the ball goes to the opponents.
- If the referee plays advantage following a DOGSO offence and a goal is scored, there is no red or yellow card.

Dropped Ball

- If play is stopped when the ball was going out of play, the ball is dropped for the team that would have taken the restart.
- If play is stopped because of interference by a match official or an outside agent, the ball is dropped where the interference occurred.

Goal Kick

If a team is taking too long with a goal kick, the referee will signal and whistle and start a five-second countdown using a raised hand. If the kick is not taken by the end of the countdown, the opposing team get a corner kick.

Injuries

Except in certain situations, a player who is assessed/treated on the pitch, or who causes play to be stopped because of an injury, must leave the pitch and remain off it for one minute after play has restarted.

Leaving the field in protest

At the discretion of the competition organiser, players who leave the field to protest a referee's decision may receive a red card. Team officials who encourage this may also be sanctioned. A team that causes a match to be abandoned will normally forfeit the match.

Mouth covering

At the discretion of the competition organiser, any player covering their mouth in a confrontational situation with an opponent may be sanctioned with a red card.

Players & Substitutes

Up to eight substitutes may be used in senior 'A' international team friendly matches. This can be increased up to eleven if both teams agree and inform the referee before the match. The limit of three substitution opportunities remains.

Players' Kit

Accessories (e.g. bracelets, wedding bands, small earrings etc.) are allowed if they are not dangerous and if they are safely and securely covered.

>> *more*

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RULE CHANGES 2026/27 SUMMARY

Referee & Other Match Officials

- Competitions can provide referees, assistant referees and fourth officials with body cameras.
- All match officials can wear accessories if they are not dangerous.

Substitutions

The player being substituted must leave the pitch within ten seconds. If this time limit is exceeded, the substitute cannot enter until the first stoppage after one minute's play.

Throw-in

If a team is taking too long with a throw-in, the referee will signal and whistle and start a five-second countdown using a raised hand. If the throw is not taken by the end of the countdown, the opposing team gets the throw-in.

VAR

The VAR can check incidents relating to:

- clearly wrong second yellow cards (resulting in an incorrect red card)
- a player being wrongly shown a red or yellow card when the offence was committed by another player
- wrongly awarded corner kicks, but only if the decision can be changed immediately (this is a competition option)

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ADVANTAGE

What is the advantage in football?

The advantage is played by the referee when an offence (foul, handball, offside, technical, etc.) is committed and, because the non-offending team has useful possession of the ball, the referee allows play to continue, as it is of greater benefit to them than awarding a free kick. The advantage can also be played if a restart is taken incorrectly and the opponents can benefit, but only if the ball comes into play, e.g. the ball goes to the opponents from a foul throw-in or from a free kick taken from the wrong place or when the ball was moving.

The referee signals an advantage by extending one or both arms in front of their body at shoulder height.

When does the referee play the advantage in football?

The referee should only play the advantage if:

- there is a real benefit to be gained by the non-offending team
- no player is seriously injured
- there is no risk of a reaction or confrontation

Unless there is a clear goal-scoring opportunity for the non-offending team, the referee should not play the advantage following red-card offences, particularly those involving serious foul play or violent conduct, or offences that require a second yellow card.

The referee must make a quick, calculated decision and should remember that:

- allowing play to continue is not always in the best interest of the non-offending team, e.g. if they are in or near their own penalty area and/or under pressure
- awarding a free kick in an attacking position may be better for the non-offending team than allowing play to continue

The referee can wait a few seconds to allow a possible advantage to develop, and if the non-offending team does not benefit and gains no advantage, the free kick can be given for the original offence. However, the non-offending team should not be given two chances to benefit. For instance, if a player is fouled, recovers, has a shot at goal and fails to score, the referee cannot go back and give a free kick for the original offence.

If the referee plays the advantage following an offence that would have resulted in a red or yellow card being shown, the card must be shown the next time the game stops. However:

- if the offence was denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, a yellow card is shown instead of a red card, as playing the advantage allowed the attack to continue. If the attack results in a goal, there is no yellow card (or red card) – this also applies when a player handles the ball to try to stop a goal but does not succeed and a goal is scored
- if the offence was stopping or interfering with a promising attack, no card is shown as playing the advantage allowed the attack to continue

What happens if...

a defender starts fouling (e.g. holding) an opponent outside the penalty area and the foul continues into the penalty area?

The referee plays the advantage for the offence committed outside the area and awards a penalty kick.

a defender starts fouling (e.g. holding) an opponent inside the penalty area and the foul continues outside the penalty area?

The referee awards a penalty kick (no advantage is played).

[more >>](#)

ADVANTAGE

an advantage is played and the player who committed the offence and should have been shown a red card (including a second yellow card) then gets involved in the game?

The referee stops play, sends off the player in question and awards an indirect free kick to the opponents (unless the player commits another offence punishable with a direct free kick/penalty kick).

there is a foul throw and the ball goes to the opponents?

The referee can allow play to continue if it benefits the non-offending team.

a team takes a throw-in, free kick, goal kick, corner kick or kick off from the wrong place and/or when the ball is moving and it goes to the opponents?

The referee can allow play to continue if it benefits the non-offending team.

the referee plays the advantage in an obvious goal-scoring situation outside the penalty area?

If the attack does not result in a goal, the offender is shown a yellow card, but if a goal is scored, there is no card.

a defender uses their hand(s)/arm(s) to try to stop the ball going into the goal but is unsuccessful?

The referee awards a goal and there is no red or yellow card.

ARGUING

What is arguing in football?

Arguing, complaining or protesting about a decision is known as 'dissent' in football. It can be verbal (with words) or physical (running at the referee, making gestures, kicking or throwing the ball away, etc.).

How do referees deal with arguing in football?

Players, substitutes, coaches and other team officials should respect the decisions of the referee and the other match officials.

An initial, instinctive, non-exaggerated manifestation of disagreement, objection or complaint is usually accepted by the referee as a natural reaction.

However, clear and/or continual dissent (with words, actions or gestures) is punished with a yellow card and, if play is stopped because of the dissent, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team.

If the words or gestures are offensive, insulting or abusive, the player must be shown a red card.

In competitions using the 'Only the captain' guidelines, the captains are the only players who can approach the referee after a major decision or incident. If other players approach the referee in these situations, they risk receiving a yellow card.

What happens if...

a player shows clear dissent by running at the referee but does not say anything?

The player is shown a yellow card.

a player shows clear dissent by making gestures but does not say anything?

The player is shown a yellow card.

play is stopped because of dissent?

An indirect free kick is awarded and the offending player is shown a yellow card.

BALL

What is a football ball?

In football, the ball is round and is used by the players to score a goal. It is usually made of a series of synthetic waterproof panels.

What are the requirements for a football ball?

The ball must be round and made of safe and suitable material. The Laws/Rules give information about the size, weight and pressure of the ball [here](#). Smaller balls are usually used for youth/children's football. The ball must be pumped up (inflated) so that it is not too hard or soft.

The referee must check the ball before the game starts and may do so at any time during the game. They must also do so when:

- the ball sounds or feels flat
- players complain about the ball
- the ball is changed (unless a multi-ball system is being used; in this case, the referee must check all the balls before the game starts)

The ball cannot be changed without the referee's permission, except when a multi-ball system is being used.

What happens if...

the ball bursts or goes flat while it is in play?

The ball is replaced and the referee drops the replacement ball for the defending-team goalkeeper if the ball was in the penalty area when play was stopped. Otherwise, the replacement ball is dropped for a player of the team that would have retained or gained possession (including from the restart if the ball would have gone out of play). If this is not clear to the referee, the replacement ball is dropped for a player of the team that last touched the ball at the place where it was when play was stopped.

the ball bursts or goes flat during a stoppage?

The ball is replaced and the game is restarted as if the ball had not burst or gone flat.

the ball bursts or goes flat at a penalty kick or during penalties, after it has been kicked and before it touches another player or rebounds off the goalposts or crossbar?

The ball is replaced and the penalty kick is retaken.

the ball bursts or goes flat at a penalty kick or during penalties, after it has been kicked and after it touches another player or rebounds off the goalposts or crossbar?

Penalty kick: The ball is replaced and play restarts with a dropped ball.

During penalties: The kick is recorded as 'missed' and the ball is replaced for subsequent kicks.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

BALL IN & OUT OF PLAY

When is the ball in or out of play in football?

During a match, the ball is out of play when:

- it completely crosses the touchline or goal line on the ground or in the air
- it touches the referee or other match official and goes directly into the goal
- it touches the referee or other match official, stays on the pitch and a promising attack or change of possession occurs
- the referee stops play

At all other times, the ball is in play, including if it rebounds off a goalpost, crossbar or corner flagpost and stays on the pitch.

What happens if...

the ball touches the referee or another match official and then goes out of play?

Play restarts as if the ball had not touched the referee or other match official, e.g. with a throw-in, goal kick, etc.

the ball touches the referee or another match official, stays on the pitch and the team in possession of the ball changes?

Play restarts with a dropped ball at the place where the ball made contact with the referee/other match official unless this was in the penalty area, when it is dropped for the goalkeeper.

the ball touches the referee or another match official and goes into the goal?

Play restarts with a dropped ball at the place where the ball made contact with the referee/other match official unless this was in the penalty area, when it is dropped for the goalkeeper.

the ball touches the referee or another match official, stays on the pitch and a promising attack starts?

Play restarts with a dropped ball at the place where the ball made contact with the referee/other match official unless this was in the penalty area, when it is dropped for the goalkeeper.

the referee blows the whistle by mistake and stops the game?

Play restarts with a dropped ball from the position of the ball when play was stopped.

the ball touches an outside agent (person, animal, object, etc.)?

Play restarts with a dropped ball at the place where the ball made contact with the outside agent, unless this was in the penalty area, when it is dropped for the goalkeeper.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

CAPTAINS

What is a captain in football?

A captain is the player chosen to be the team's leader and representative during the game. Each team must have a captain on the pitch who wears an armband for identification. Any player can be the team's captain, including the goalkeeper. The captain may be changed during the game (e.g. when the captain is substituted or sent off).

What is the role of the captain in football?

The captain should take responsibility for the behaviour of their team-mates, encouraging them to play fairly and respect the match officials and their decisions. However, they cannot be shown a red or yellow card for offences committed by a team-mate.

The captain has no special privileges to protest or argue with the referee or other match officials.

An increasing number of competitions are using the 'Only the captain' guidelines, where the captains are the only players who can approach the referee after a major decision or incident.* Captains are expected to encourage their team-mates to behave respectfully and not approach the referee in these situations.

Both captains take part in the coin toss.

**The 'Only the captain' guidelines will become compulsory for all competitions starting on or after 1st July 2027.*

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

COACHES & OTHER TEAM OFFICIALS

Who are team officials in football?

There are usually three categories of people named on the team list: players, substitutes and team officials. The team officials are the non-playing personnel responsible for coaching, medical matters etc.

The head coach is the senior team official and is responsible for the behaviour of everyone in the technical area, including substitutes, substituted players and the other team officials, such as:

- assistant coaches
- medical staff (doctor, physiotherapist, etc.)
- administrative staff

What are team officials allowed to do during a football game?

Only team officials named on the team list are allowed on the bench/in the technical area (if there is one).

The team officials must remain in the technical area unless permitted to come onto the pitch by the referee, e.g. to assess or treat an injured player. Some competition rules allow the fitness coach to oversee the substitutes while they are warming up.

What happens if...

someone in the technical area commits an offence but the offender cannot be identified?

The head coach is warned or shown a red or yellow card (depending on the offence).

a team official leaves the technical area to watch from the stand and then returns to the technical area?

This is allowed.

a team official uses a laptop or other electronic equipment in the technical area?

This is allowed, as long as it does not cause arguing, dissent, protests, etc.

a player-coach wants to be a substitute?

Unless competition rules state otherwise, they must be shown on the team list as a substitute and not as a team official. They are allowed to act as a coach until they go onto the pitch to play.

a team official touches the ball as it is going out of play?

If there was no intention to interfere unfairly, an indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown. If the action was intended to be unfair, a direct free kick is awarded and the team official is shown a red card.

COMPETITION RULES

What are competition rules in football?

In addition to the Laws of the Game, all competitive matches (leagues, cups, knockouts, etc.) have competition rules, which include important information that affects the game. Competition rules will vary according to the level of football.

What competition rules are important for a game?

Some competition rules may link directly to the 'General modifications' section of the Laws, which allows competitions to modify a number of areas (size of the pitch, goals and ball; number of substitutions; duration of the halves, etc.) for grassroots, youth, disability and veterans football.

Below are some important areas determined by competition rules that the referee, other match officials and team officials of both teams should be aware of:

- **How long the game (and extra time) lasts**

- > Whether the standard length of the halves of the game (45 minutes) and extra time (15 minutes) may be shorter:
 - for youth/disability football
 - because of a late kick-off, bad weather, etc.

- **Team lists**

- > Whether each team must give a team list to:
 - the referee
 - the opponents
- > If team lists are required:
 - is there an official team list document?
 - must it be signed, and if so, by whom?
 - is there a deadline by which the team list must be given to the referee (and opponents), e.g. at least 30 minutes before kick-off?
 - can changes be made to the team list after it has been submitted, e.g. if a player becomes ill/injured?

- **Substitutes**

- > How many substitutes can each team:
 - name on the team list?
 - use during the game?
- > How many substitution opportunities does each team have? *This usually only applies in top-level football, where the maximum is three (substitutions made during half-time do not count as an opportunity)*
- > Is a team allowed to use an extra substitute and, where appropriate, an extra substitution opportunity during extra time?

- **Scores are level at full-time in a cup/knockout game**

- > Is there:
 - extra time and then, if necessary, penalties?
 - no extra time, only penalties?
 - an away-goals rule that applies before extra time/penalties?

- **Video assistant referee (VAR) protocol**

- > Competitions can decide whether to allow the VAR to review wrongly awarded corner kicks, but only if the decision can be changed immediately

>> more

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COMPETITION RULES

- **Other areas that might be included in the competition rules**

- > What to do if:
 - both teams have the same colour shirts, i.e. which team must change
 - the referee (or another match official) does not arrive or cannot continue
 - there are doubts about whether the pitch is playable (due to ice, snow, waterlogged surface, etc.)
 - the floodlights go out
 - there are problems with spectators
 - the game is interrupted by bad weather
 - the technology (VAR system, goal line technology or semi-automated offside technology) stops working

What happens if...

something happens which is against, or not mentioned, in the competition rules?

The problem should be dealt with immediately where possible.

If the problem cannot be solved, a decision will need to be taken about whether the game can start/continue.

The matter should always be reported to the competition organisers after the game.

CORNER AREA & FLAGS

What is the corner area in football?

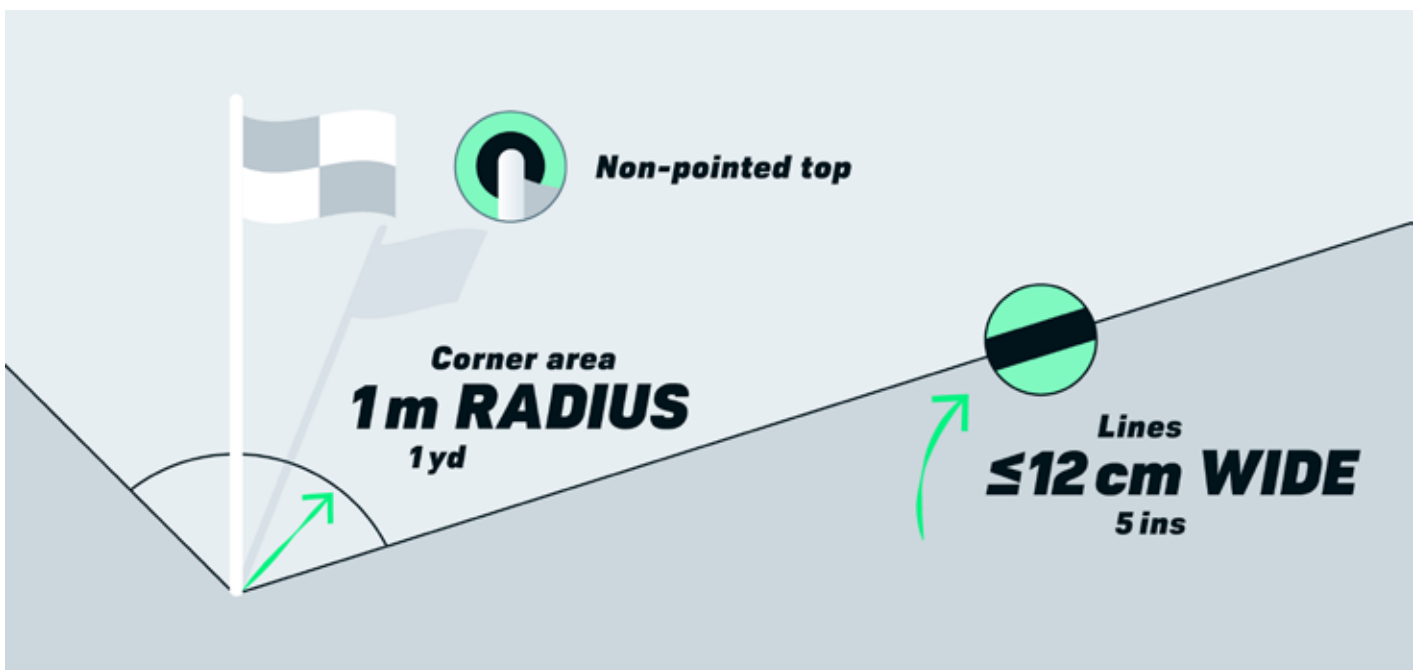
A corner area is found at each of the four corners of the pitch. The corner area is where the ball is placed when a player takes a corner kick.

What are the requirements for the corner area in football?

Corner areas have a corner flag (a post with a flag at the top) which is placed at the intersection of the touchline and goal line. The flagpost must be at least 1.5 m (5 ft) high and must not be pointed or dangerous.

There is a curved line or arc drawn inside the pitch from the touchline to the goal line with a radius of 1 m (1 yd) from the corner flagpost. When a corner kick is taken, the ball must be on or overhanging the arc or fully inside the corner area.

Sometimes a small line is marked outside the pitch along the touchline and/or goal line at a distance of 9.15 m (10 yds) from the corner arc to help the match officials ensure that opponents maintain at least that distance at a corner kick.



At most levels, if there are no or not enough corner flags or if any of them is damaged, the game should still be played.

Corner flags must not be removed to take a corner kick or throw-in.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

CORNER KICK

What is a corner kick in football?

A corner kick is the restart of play after:

- the whole of the ball has gone out over the goal line (but not into the goal), on the ground or in the air, and it was last touched by a defending-team player
- the goalkeeper has been penalised for holding the ball for more than eight seconds
- a team has been penalised for not taking a goal kick by the end of the referee's five-second countdown

The corner kick is taken by the attacking team from the corner area on the side of the pitch where the ball went out of play, where the goalkeeper was standing when penalised or closest to where the goal kick was to be taken.

What should happen at a corner kick in football?

When the corner kick is taken, the ball must be:

- stationary (not moving)
- inside the corner area or on or overhanging the corner arc

All opponents must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the corner arc.

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

The kicker cannot touch the ball again until another player from either team has touched it.

A goal is awarded if the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal.

Attacking-team players cannot be offside from a corner kick.

What happens if...

the ball is moving when the kick is taken?

The kick is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

the ball is not in the corner area when the kick is taken?

The kick is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

an opponent is not 9.15 m (10 yds) from the corner arc when the kick is taken and then interferes with the game?

The kick is retaken and a yellow card is shown to the offending player.

the ball goes straight into the opponents' goal?

A goal is awarded.

>> *more*

>> continued

CORNER KICK

the ball goes straight into the kicker's goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight out over the touchline?

A throw-in is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight out over the other team's goal line?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight out over the kicker's goal line?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

DRINKS & COOLING BREAKS

What are drinks and cooling breaks in football?

A drinks break is when the game is stopped for players to rehydrate, and a cooling break is when the game is stopped for players to cool down, particularly when it is hot and/or humid.

What should happen during drinks and cooling breaks in football?

A drinks break:

- usually occurs around the middle of each half
- must not last more than one minute
- involves the players:
 - > getting drinks from their team officials
 - > staying on the pitch
- should not become a coaching session

A cooling break:

- usually occurs around the middle of each half
- must not last more than three minutes
- involves the players:
 - > getting drinks from their team officials
 - > sitting/standing in the shade (if possible) – they may leave the pitch to do so
- should not become a coaching session

Competition rules may define the weather conditions in which drinks and/or cooling breaks are permitted. Temperature and humidity are likely to be the key factors in that regard.

The referee adds the time taken for drinks and/or cooling breaks to the additional time at the end of the half in which the break occurred.

What happens if...

teams/players try to take a longer break than is allowed?

The referee must insist that the game restart promptly.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

DROPPED BALL

What is a dropped ball in football?

A dropped ball is a way of restarting the match after the referee stops play when there was no foul or other offence. It is most often used when play is stopped because of an injury or because the ball has hit the referee or become defective.

What should happen when there is a dropped ball in football?

The referee restarts play with a dropped ball when:

- play is stopped because of an injury or something serious (bad weather, spectators on the pitch, a spectator blows a whistle that interferes with the game, floodlights go out, etc.)
- play is stopped because of interference by an animal or object or any person who is not a match official, player, substitute, substituted player or team official (outside agent)
- the ball touches the referee (or another match official), stays on the pitch and:
 - the ball goes into the goal
 - the team in possession of the ball changes
 - a promising attack starts
 - the referee blows the whistle by mistake and stops the game

When play is restarted with a dropped ball:

- the referee drops the ball
- players from both teams must be at least 4 m (4.5 yds) from the ball, apart from the player receiving the dropped ball
- the ball is in play when it touches the ground; it must not be touched before that
- the player receiving the dropped ball can dribble or continue playing the ball but cannot score unless it touches at least one other player (from either team)

The ball is dropped for the defending-team goalkeeper (regardless of which team last touched the ball) if the ball was in the penalty area (whether on the ground or in the air) when the referee stopped the game. In all other cases, the ball is dropped for a player of the team that would have retained or gained possession; if the ball was going out of play, this means the team that would have taken the restart.

If it is not clear to the referee who would have kept/gained possession, the ball is dropped for a player of the team that last touched the ball.

If there is a dropped ball because the ball touched a match official or an outside agent, the ball is dropped at the place where this interference occurred. In all other cases (except as outlined above when the ball is in the penalty area), the ball is dropped at the place where it was when play was stopped.

What happens if...

a player touches the ball before it touches the ground?

The dropped ball is repeated.

a player is less than 4 m (4.5 yds) away?

The dropped ball is repeated and the offending player may be shown a yellow card.

>> *more*

>> continued

DROPPED BALL

the ball goes out over the goal line or touchline without touching any player (including the player the ball is dropped for)?

The dropped ball is repeated.

the ball goes into either goal without touching any player (including the player the ball is dropped for)?

The dropped ball is repeated.

the ball goes into the goal of the player who received the dropped ball after they have played it and without it touching another player?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball is played by the player to whom it is dropped and then goes into the opponents' goal without touching another player?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball is going out of play but hits the referee or an assistant referee and does not go out?

A dropped ball is awarded to the team that would have taken the throw-in, goal kick or corner kick; the ball is dropped where it hit the referee/assistant referee.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

FEINTING

What is feinting in football?

Feinting is when a player tries to trick an opponent by pretending to kick the ball or dummies the ball, but then delays the kick or does not kick the ball.

When is feinting allowed and not allowed in football?

Feinting is allowed during open play, as well as when taking a free kick, goal kick or corner kick.

When a penalty kick is being taken, the kicker can stop and start as they run or walk towards the ball, but they must kick the ball immediately at the end of their run-up, i.e. they cannot feint/pretend to kick the ball.

What happens if...

at a free kick, goal kick or corner kick, the kicker feints to kick the ball and an opponent moves within 9.15 m (10 yds) of the ball and interferes with the kick?

The opponent is shown a yellow card and the kick is retaken.

at a penalty kick or during penalties, the kicker feints at the end of their run-up but does not kick the ball?

The kicker is shown a yellow card and the kick is then taken correctly.

at a penalty kick or during penalties, the kicker feints at the end of their run-up and then kicks the ball?

Penalty kick: The kicker is shown a yellow card and an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team.

During penalties: The kicker is shown a yellow card and the kick is recorded as missed.

FOULS

What is a foul in football?

A foul is an unfair physical offence committed against an opponent, usually with the foot, leg, hand or arm but sometimes with another part of the body such as the hip or shoulder. Fouls involving physical contact result in a direct free kick being awarded to the opponent, whereas most non-contact offences (e.g. raising a high foot without making contact with the opponent) result in an indirect free kick being awarded.

Offences that are not committed against an opponent are not fouls, e.g. handball, offside.

What are the different types of fouls in football?

No card

- Careless
 - > Minor foul (often accidental) with limited or no risk of injury to the opponent

Yellow card

- Reckless
 - > Fairly serious foul with a risk of injury to the opponent
- Stopping a promising attack
 - > Tactical foul that stops a promising attack – it is the result of the foul which is punished

If a foul is both reckless and stops a promising attack, it is recorded as reckless, as this is more serious.

Red card

- Serious foul play/excessive force
 - > Major foul that endangers the safety of the opponent with a risk of serious injury, often due to the use of excessive force
- Denying a goal or obvious goal-scoring opportunity
 - > Tactical foul that stops a goal or a clear chance of scoring – it is the result of the foul which is punished

If a foul is both serious foul play and denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, it is recorded as serious foul play, as this is more serious.

- Violent conduct is a serious physical offence which is not an attempt to play the ball (e.g. punching, kicking, head-butting) and is punished with a free kick (if the ball is in play) and a red card. Violent conduct sometimes occurs:
 - > away from the ball
 - > when play has been stopped, e.g. reaction to being fouled

Which fouls are punished with a direct free kick?

The following fouls are punished with a direct free kick if committed against an opponent in a way that is considered to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- unfairly charging/bumping
- jumping at
- kicking or trying to kick
- pushing
- hitting/striking or trying to hit/strike (including a head-butt)
- unfairly tackling/challenging
- tripping or trying to trip

more >>

>> continued

FOULS

The following fouls are also punished with a direct free kick, but no judgement of carelessness, recklessness or excessive force is necessary; they may be offences that stop a promising attack or deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity:

- holding an opponent
- playing dangerously* and making contact with an opponent, e.g. high foot with contact
- obstructing/impeding an opponent** and making contact with them
- biting or spitting at anyone on the team lists or a match official
- throwing something at the ball, an opponent or a match official, or using/holding something to make contact with the ball

Which fouls are punished with an indirect free kick?

The following fouls are punished with an indirect free kick as long as there is no contact with the opponent (fouls that make contact with the opponent result in a direct free kick):

- playing dangerously*, e.g. high foot (no contact)
- obstructing/impeding an opponent** (no contact)
- preventing/blocking a goalkeeper from releasing the ball from their hands
- trying to kick/play the ball when the goalkeeper is holding it
- committing any other offence not mentioned in the Laws, for which play is stopped to show a player a red or yellow card

*Playing dangerously is when a player attempts to play the ball and could injure someone (including the player themselves) and/or prevents a nearby opponent from trying to play the ball for fear of getting injured. An overhead, bicycle or scissors kick is allowed if there is no danger to an opponent.

**Obstruction is when a player moves into an opponent's path to block, slow down or force a change of direction when neither player can play the ball. It is not a foul if the players are already in each other's space and an accidental collision or contact occurs.

What happens if...

a player tries to trip, strike, kick or jump at an opponent but does not make contact?

Even though there is no contact, a direct free kick is awarded (or a penalty kick if the offence takes place in the offender's penalty area), as these are serious offences.

a high foot makes contact with an opponent?

A direct free kick is awarded (or a penalty kick if the offence takes place in the offender's penalty area) and the player may be shown a red or yellow card.

there is a foul by Team A and then a foul by Team B before the referee can stop play?

The first foul is punished, i.e. a free kick is awarded to Team B (or a penalty kick if the offence took place in Team A's penalty area).

more >>

>> continued

FOULS

two offences occur at the same time?

The more serious offence is punished, i.e. a physical foul is more serious than a handball.

there is a technical offence (e.g. offside) by Team A and then a foul by Team B before the referee can stop play?

The first offence is punished, i.e. the offside, and a free kick is awarded to Team B.

a foul and technical offence occur at the same time (e.g. foul and offside)?

The foul is punished as it is the more serious offence.

a player commits a foul that is both reckless and stops a promising attack?

A yellow card is shown to the player for being reckless, which is more serious than the tactical nature of stopping a promising attack.

a foul is committed but the fouled team can continue with the ball?

The referee can allow play to continue by playing the advantage.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

FREE KICKS

What are free kicks and when are they awarded in football?

Free kicks are awarded to a team following a foul or offence committed against them by a player, substitute, substituted player, sent-off player or team official of the opposing team. There are two main types of free kick: direct and indirect.

Direct free kicks allow the player taking the kick to score a goal directly from it without the ball having to touch another player first. A goal can only be scored from an indirect free kick if the ball touches another player from either team before entering the goal.

Penalty kick: When a direct-free-kick offence is committed by the defending team in their own penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded to the opposing team.

Wall: The defending team may form a 'wall' to try to block a free kick in an advanced or attacking position for the other team. Players in the wall must stand at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball. Attacking players must remain at least 1 m (1 yd) from the wall if it has three or more defenders in it.

Quick v. ceremonial free kicks: Free kicks can be taken quickly to catch the opposition off guard, but the referee may also indicate a ceremonial free kick where all players must be in the correct position(s) and the whistle should be blown for the kick to be taken.

What happens when a free kick is taken in football?

Free kicks are taken from the place where the offence was committed except when:

- an offence is committed in the goal area, in which case:
 - > a free kick for the defending team can be taken from anywhere in the goal area
 - > an indirect free kick for the attacking team is taken from the nearest point on the line of the goal area which runs parallel to the goal line
- the offence of leaving, entering or re-entering the pitch without permission is committed, in which case the free kick is taken from the position of the ball when play was stopped
- an offence is committed off the pitch, in which case the free kick is taken from the point on the boundary line closest to where the offence occurred (if it is a direct-free-kick offence and the point on the boundary line is in the offending player's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded)

When a free kick is taken:

- the ball:
 - > must be stationary (not moving)
 - > is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- except for quick free kicks, until the ball is in play, all opponents must remain:
 - > at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball, unless they are on their own goal line between the goalposts (in cases where there is an indirect free kick within 9.15 m (10 yds) of the goal line)
 - > outside the penalty area for a free kick inside the opponents' penalty area
- if the defending team make a defensive wall of three or more players, all attacking-team players must be at least 1 m (1 yd) from the wall until the ball is in play
- the kicker cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it

If an indirect free kick is awarded, the referee raises one arm above their head and keeps it in this position until the kick has been taken and:

- the ball goes out of play or touches another player
- there is no possibility of the ball going directly into the goal

more >>

>> continued

FREE KICKS



Indirect free kick



Direct free kick

What happens if...

a direct free kick goes into the opponents' goal without another player touching the ball?

A goal is awarded.

an indirect free kick goes into the opponents' goal without another player touching the ball?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

a direct or indirect free kick goes into the kicker's goal without another player touching the ball?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the referee awards an indirect free kick but forgets to use the indirect free kick signal and the ball goes into the goal without another player touching it?

The free kick is retaken by the same team.

the ball is moving when the kick is taken?

The free kick is retaken by the same team, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

the free kick is taken from the wrong position?

The free kick is retaken by the same team, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

>> more

>> continued

FREE KICKS

the kicker touches the ball again before another player has touched it?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

A yellow card is shown if the second touch stopped a promising attack.

A red card is shown if the second touch stopped a goal or denied the opponents an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

the kicker feints/pretends to take the free kick?

This is allowed.

an opponent is less than 9.15 m (10 yds) from a free kick when it is taken and interferes with the kick?

Unless the referee plays the advantage, the kick is retaken and the offending player is shown a yellow card.

an opponent is less than 9.15 m (10 yds) from a free kick, but the kick is taken quickly and the opponent did not have time to move into a position that respected the required distance?

If there is no interference, play continues.

If the opponent interferes with the kick, then it is retaken.

If the free kick is taken and the ball is then intercepted, play continues.

there is a free kick to the defending team inside their own penalty area and an opponent is inside the penalty area when the kick is taken who interferes with the kick?

Unless the referee plays the advantage, the kick is retaken.

there is a free kick to the defending team inside their own penalty area, but the kick is taken quickly and there is an opponent inside the penalty area?

If there is no interference, play continues.

If the opponent interferes with the kick, then it is retaken.

If the free kick is taken and the ball is then intercepted, play continues.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

GOAL KICK

What is a goal kick in football?

A goal kick is the restart of play after the whole of the ball has gone out over the goal line (but not into the goal), on the ground or in the air, and was last touched by an attacking-team player.

A goal kick is taken by the defending team from anywhere in the goal area.

What should happen at a goal kick in football?

The ball must be stationary (not moving).

All of the opponents must be outside the penalty area until the ball is kicked, unless the kick is taken so quickly that they do not have time to leave the penalty area.

The ball:

- is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- does not have to leave the penalty area before it can be played by another player

The kicker cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it.

What happens if...

the ball is moving when the goal kick is taken?

The goal kick is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

the ball is not in the goal area when the goal kick is taken?

The goal kick is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

an opponent enters or stays in the penalty area and interferes with the goal kick?

The goal kick is retaken and the player may be shown a yellow card.

an opponent does not have time to leave the penalty area and interferes with the goal kick?

Play continues, as long as the player did not prevent the kick from being taken.

the ball goes straight out over the touchline?

A throw-in is awarded to the other team.

>> *more*

>> continued

GOAL KICK

the ball goes straight out over the team's own goal line?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight out over the opponents' goal line?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight into the kicker's own goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the ball goes straight into the opponents' goal?

A goal is awarded.

the kicker touches the ball again before it has touched another player?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

an 'illegal' second touch stops a promising attack?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown to the offending player.

an 'illegal' second touch stops the ball from going into the goal?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown to the offending player (a goal has not been prevented because if the ball had gone into the goal, it would have been a corner kick).

>> more

>> continued

GOAL KICK

an 'illegal' second touch denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity?

An indirect free kick is awarded. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and a red card is shown to the offending player.

a team is taking too long with a goal kick?

The referee will whistle, signal and count down five seconds using a raised hand – if the kick has not been taken by the end of the countdown, a corner kick is awarded to the other team. The offending player is not shown a yellow card unless they then excessively delay the taking of the corner kick by the other team.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

GOAL LINE TECHNOLOGY (GLT)

What is goal line technology in football?

Goal line technology (GLT) is a system that may be used to alert the referee when a goal has been scored.

How does goal line technology work in football?

The GLT system includes cameras and/or sensors and computers that automatically detect the position of the ball and, within one second, send a signal to the referee's watch and/or headset when the whole of the ball has gone over the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

GOALKEEPERS

What is a goalkeeper in football?

A goalkeeper, also called a 'goalie' or 'keeper', is the player whose main role is to stop the ball from entering their team's goal. Each team must have a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper is the only player allowed to handle the ball but may only do so in their own penalty area.

The goalkeeper's shirt must be a different colour from the rest of their own team, the other team and ideally the referee.

What is a goalkeeper allowed to do in football?

A goalkeeper is allowed to:

- use their hands/arms to play the ball inside their own penalty area, except if they receive the ball directly from a throw-in or backpass (deliberate kick) from a team-mate
- bounce the ball on the ground or throw the ball in the air
- wear additional equipment, e.g. gloves, cap, tracksuit bottoms
- take part in normal play outside their penalty area (without using their hands/arms)
- take a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, free kick or penalty kick or receive a dropped ball
- hold the ball for no more than eight seconds* after gaining control** of it with their hands/arms
- change places with another player, as long as the referee is informed and the change occurs when the game is stopped

What is a goalkeeper not allowed to do in football?

A goalkeeper is not allowed to:

- touch the ball with their hands/arms outside their penalty area
- touch the ball with their hands/arms when they receive the ball directly from a throw-in or backpass (deliberate kick) from a team-mate
- hold the ball for more than eight seconds* after gaining control** of it with their hands/arms
- touch the ball with their hands/arms after releasing it from their hands (this does not include after making a save) and before it has touched another player
- touch the ball after taking a free kick, goal kick, corner kick, penalty kick or throw-in and before it has touched another player
- score a goal with their hands/arms against the other team
- hang onto the crossbar to make a save
- have one or both feet in front of or behind the goal line before a penalty kick is taken
- have both feet in front of the goal line when the penalty kick is taken
- touch or shake the goalposts, crossbar or goal net when a penalty kick is taken

*To assist the goalkeeper, the referee will visually count down the final five seconds with the fingers of a raised hand

**The goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball with their hands/arms and subject to the eight-second limit when:

- holding the ball in their hands/arms
- bouncing the ball on the ground or throwing it in the air
- the ball is between their hands/arms and/or any surface (e.g. ground or own body)

>> *more*

>> continued

GOALKEEPERS

What happens if...

a goalkeeper commits a handball offence outside their penalty area?

A direct free kick is awarded and:

- a yellow card is shown if a promising attack was stopped or
- a red card is shown if an obvious goal-scoring opportunity was denied.

a goalkeeper handles a backpass?

An indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown.

a goalkeeper handles a throw-in directly from a team-mate?

An indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown.

a goalkeeper handles the ball again after a save?

Play continues.

a goalkeeper holds the ball for longer than eight seconds?

A corner kick is awarded to the opposition and no card is shown to the goalkeeper, unless they do this a number of times.

a goalkeeper throws the ball into the opponents' goal?

A goal kick is awarded.

a goalkeeper throws the ball into their own goal?

A goal is awarded.

a goalkeeper hangs onto the crossbar to make a save?

An indirect free kick is awarded and, if a goal was stopped, the goalkeeper is shown a red card.

a goalkeeper touches or shakes the goalposts, crossbar or goal net before or during a penalty kick?

A goal is awarded if the penalty kick is scored. If the kick is missed, it is only retaken if the goalkeeper's actions clearly impacted the kicker. If the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper receives a warning for the first offence and a caution for any further offence(s).

GOALS

What are football goals?

Goals are the white structures formed by a pair of posts and a crossbar and located in the middle of the goal line at each end of the pitch. The key aim of football is to score by getting the ball in the opponents' goal.

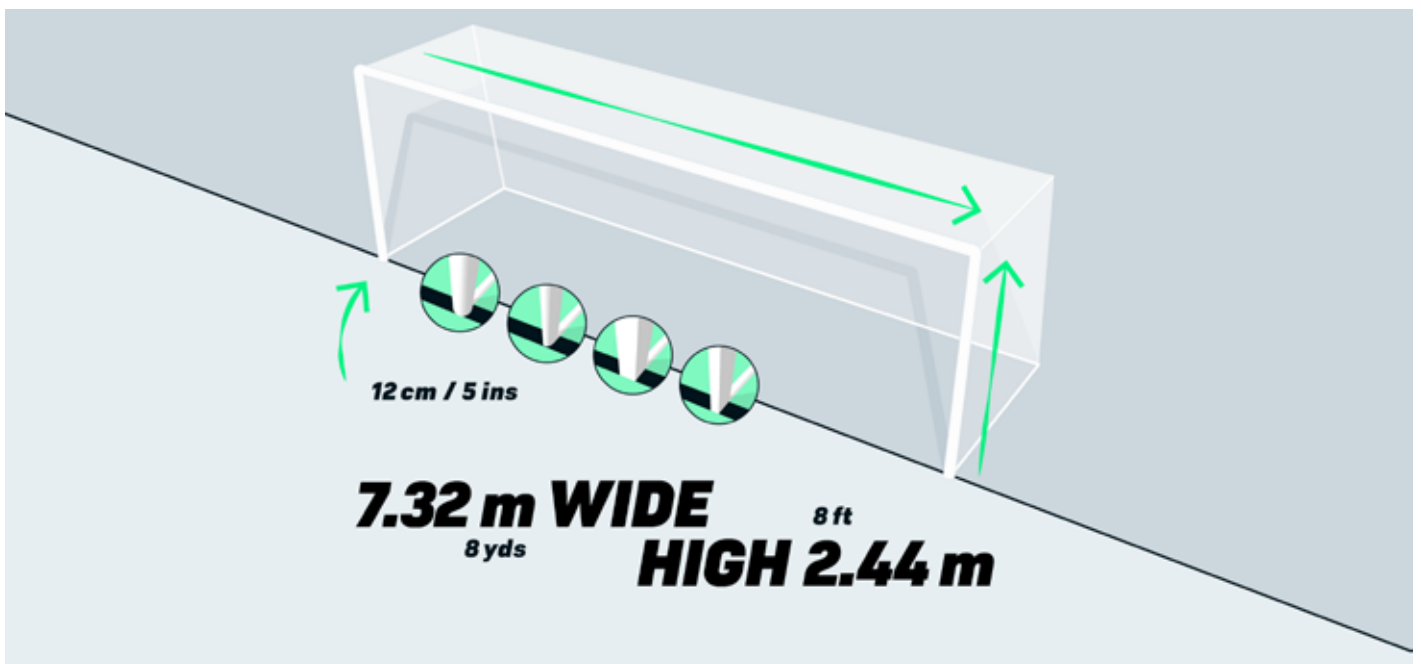
What are the requirements for football goals?

The goals consist of two vertical goalposts joined at the top by a crossbar, all of which should be white and are usually made of wood, aluminium or other suitable materials. The goalposts and crossbar of both goals must be of the same width (maximum 12 cm/5 ins) and the same shape (square, rectangular, round, elliptical or a mixture of these shapes).

The standard dimensions of adults' football goals are:

- **Width:** 7.32 m (8 yds)
- **Height:** 2.44 m (8 ft)

Smaller goals are allowed for youth/children's football.



For safety reasons, all goals (including portable goals) must be securely fixed to the ground.

Nets are not compulsory, but if they are used, they must be fixed to the goalposts, crossbar and the ground, making sure that the goalkeeper has enough space to move.

If the crossbar breaks, it must be replaced or fixed. A rope or any other flexible or dangerous material cannot be used to replace the crossbar. If it cannot be suitably replaced or fixed, the game must be abandoned.

Cameras and/or microphones are not allowed to be inside or attached to the goalposts, crossbars or goal nets. Advertising is not allowed on the ground enclosed by the goal nets.

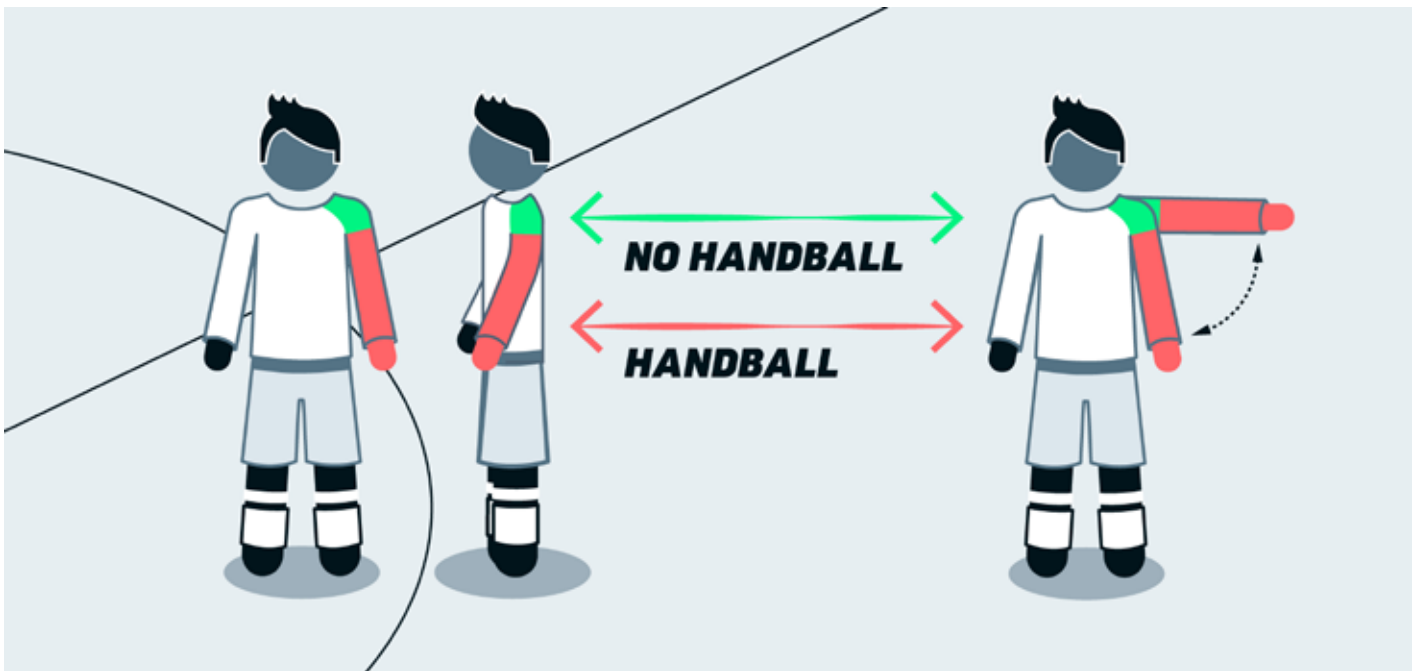
For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

HANDBALL

What is handball in football?

Handball is the illegal contact/touch of the ball with the hand(s) and/or arm(s). However, it is not automatically a handball offence every time the ball touches a player's hand/arm.

Only contact between the ball and the hand or the arm below the bottom of the armpit is considered when judging possible handball offences.



What is a handball offence in football?

A handball offence is committed when a player (except the goalkeeper in their own penalty area):

- deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm
- touches the ball with their hand/arm when it is in a position that makes their body unnaturally bigger and that position is not the result of their body moving fairly as part of play
- scores a goal against the other team with their hand/arm or scores immediately after the ball has touched their hand/arm (even if the touch was accidental)

What is not a handball offence in football?

A handball offence is not committed when a player:

- heads, kicks or plays the ball with another part of their body and it then hits their own hand/arm (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards)
- falls and the ball hits their supporting arm, which is between their body and the ground (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team)

more >>

>> continued

HANDBALL

- is hit on the hand/arm by the ball which has been played by a team-mate (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team)

A handball is punished with a direct free kick (or a penalty kick if the handball offence occurs in the player's own penalty area).

When can the goalkeeper handle the ball in football?

In their own penalty area, goalkeepers are allowed to use their hand(s)/arm(s) to touch, catch and hold the ball, except:

- when they receive the ball directly from a team-mate from a throw-in or deliberate kick (backpass)
- after they have controlled the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s), released it and before it has touched another player

Goalkeepers are not allowed to handle the ball outside their own penalty area.

What happens if...

a player is falling and the ball hits their supporting arm, which is between their body and the ground?

This is not a handball (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team).

a player is hit on the hand/arm by the ball from a team-mate's kick/header?

This is not a handball (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team).

a player heads/kicks the ball and it then hits their own hand/arm?

This is not a handball (unless the ball goes directly into the opponents' goal or the player scores immediately afterwards, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the other team).

a player prevents the ball from going into their own goal with their hand/arm but does not deliberately handle the ball and does not make their body unnaturally bigger?

This is not a handball offence.

a player tries to score with their hand/arm?

A direct free kick is awarded to the other team and a yellow card is shown to the offending player (even if the attempt to score is unsuccessful).

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

INJURIES

What happens when there is an injury in a football match?

Injuries can range from minor to severe and may include sprains, strains, fractures, concussion and other types of trauma. The players' welfare is of the highest importance, but to minimise disruption to a game, only serious injuries can be treated on the pitch.

What should happen when a player is injured in a football match?

The players' welfare is of the highest importance, but to minimise disruption to a game, only serious injuries can be treated on the pitch. When a player is injured, the referee should only stop play if the injury is, or appears to be, serious. When a player is, or appears to be, only slightly injured, the referee allows play to continue.

An injured player can be assessed on the pitch but should not be treated on the pitch unless it is a serious injury.

A player who is assessed and/or treated on the pitch must then leave the pitch, except when:

- the injured player is a goalkeeper
- a goalkeeper and an outfield player collide with each other and need attention
- players from the same team collide and need attention
- a player is injured by a foul for which the offender is shown a yellow or red card
- a penalty kick has been awarded and the injured player will take the kick

A player who leaves the pitch after being assessed and/or treated on the pitch may only return after play has restarted, one minute (running clock) has passed and the referee has signalled for the player to do so. If play has stopped, the player can return to the pitch from the goal line or touchline, but if the ball is in play, the player can only return to the pitch from the touchline.

If the referee stops play for an injured player to be assessed and/or treated and no offence has been committed, play restarts with a dropped ball. If play is stopped for an injured player, the injured player must leave the pitch (whether or not they have been assessed/treated) and may only return after play has restarted, one minute (running clock) has passed and the referee has signalled for the player to return.

The referee must include the time taken to assess and/or treat an injured player on the pitch in additional time at the end of that half.

What happens if...

the stretcher is brought onto the pitch for the injured player?

The player must leave the pitch, whether on the stretcher or not. If they do not, they are shown a yellow card.

an injured player needs to be shown a red or yellow card?

The card must be shown before the player leaves the pitch.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

INSULTS & ABUSE

What is insulting and abusive behaviour in football?

Any language and/or actions that are offensive, discriminatory, insulting or abusive, which must be dealt with strongly by the referee.

How is insulting and abusive behaviour penalised in football?

A player must be shown a red card if they:

- use offensive, insulting or abusive language
- make an obscene gesture
- behave or act in a violent or offensive way

This applies for offences committed against any person in a match, including outside agents.

The referee must judge whether bad language (swearing) is offensive, discriminatory, insulting or abusive. If it is not, then the offender may be shown a yellow card or given a warning.

KICK-OFF

What is a kick-off in football?

A kick-off is the start or restart of the game and involves a player kicking the ball from the centre spot.

A kick-off is taken:

- at the beginning of each half of normal time
- at the beginning of each half of extra time
- after a goal has been scored

What happens to decide who takes the kick off?

Before the game starts, and before the start of extra time (when played), the referee calls the two captains together for a coin toss to decide which team will take the kick-off.

If the captain who wins the coin toss:

- chooses which goal to attack in the first half, the other team takes the kick-off
- chooses to take the kick-off, the other captain chooses which goal to attack in the first half

The opponents of the team that took the kick-off to start the first half will take the kick-off to start the second half. When a team scores a goal, the other team takes the kick-off to restart the game.

What happens at a kick-off in football?

- the ball must be stationary (not moving) on the centre spot
- all players must be on the pitch and in their own half, except the player taking the kick-off, who can be in the other team's half
- the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball (i.e. outside the centre circle) until it is in play
- the referee gives a signal for the kick-off to be taken
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- a goal can be scored if the ball is kicked straight into the other team's goal but not into the kicker's own goal
- the player who takes the kick-off cannot touch the ball again until it has touched another player

What happens if...

the ball is moving or not on the centre spot when the kick-off is taken?

The kick-off is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

one or more players (except the kicker) are not in their own half when the kick-off is taken?

The kick-off is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

>> *more*

>> continued

KICK-OFF

after conceding a goal, the team kicks off while the other team are off the pitch celebrating?

The kick-off is retaken, as all players must be on the pitch and in their own half.

the players of the other team are not 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball when the kick-off is taken?

The kick-off is retaken, unless the referee plays the advantage.

the ball is kicked straight into the other team's goal?

A goal is awarded.

the ball is kicked straight into the kicker's goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the kicker touches the ball again before it touches another player?

An indirect free kick is awarded. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the kicker's penalty area, a penalty is awarded, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

LAWS OF THE GAME

The Laws of the Game are association football's only officially valid set of Laws/rules and are published annually by The IFAB.

With a high level of detail, the Laws serve as the official guidelines for match officials, players and everyone involved in football and make sure that all participants have a solid point of reference. However, the Laws cannot deal with every possible situation, so where something happens which is not mentioned in the Laws, The IFAB expects the referee to make a decision within the 'spirit' of the game and its Laws – this often involves asking the question, 'what would football want/expect?'

The fact that the Laws of the Game are the same for all levels of football around the world, from the FIFA World Cup™ through to a game between children, is a considerable strength which must continue for the good of football everywhere.

The Laws of the Game are available in the four official IFAB languages (English, French, German and Spanish) as well as, thanks to the help of national associations, in some other languages. All available editions can be downloaded [here](#).

Changes to the Laws of the Game can only be made at The IFAB's Annual General Meeting (AGM), which usually takes place in March, following approval by a three-quarter majority of The IFAB's members. Any changes approved at the AGM become part of the Laws of the Game as of 1st July. Find out more about the decision-making process on [theifab.com](https://www.theifab.com).

OBSTRUCTION

What is obstruction in football?

Every player has a right to their position on the pitch. Obstruction, or impeding the progress of an opponent, is when a player unfairly moves their body to prevent a moving opponent from getting to and/or playing the ball.

It is not obstruction if a player uses their body to shield the ball from an opponent to make it difficult for them to get to the ball, as long as the ball is within playing distance*.

**Playing distance means that the player could touch the ball if they stretched out their foot/leg or jumped. For goalkeepers, it includes whether they could touch the ball by stretching out their hand(s)/arm(s).*

What happens if obstruction occurs in football?

If a player obstructs an opponent, the referee awards:

- a direct free kick if there is contact with the opponent
- an indirect free kick if there is no contact with the opponent

If the offence:

- stops a promising attack, the offender is shown a yellow card
- denies the opponents an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the offender is shown a red card

What happens if...

obstruction stops a promising attack?

A free kick is awarded and a yellow card is shown.

obstruction stops a goal/denies the opponents an obvious goal-scoring opportunity?

A free kick is awarded and a red card is shown.

OFFSIDE

What is offside in football?

Offside refers to a player being in a position in which they are not allowed to receive the ball from a team-mate as it would enable them to gain an unfair advantage. An offside offence is committed if a player becomes involved in active play and was in an offside position when the ball was played/touched by a team-mate (deliberately or accidentally).

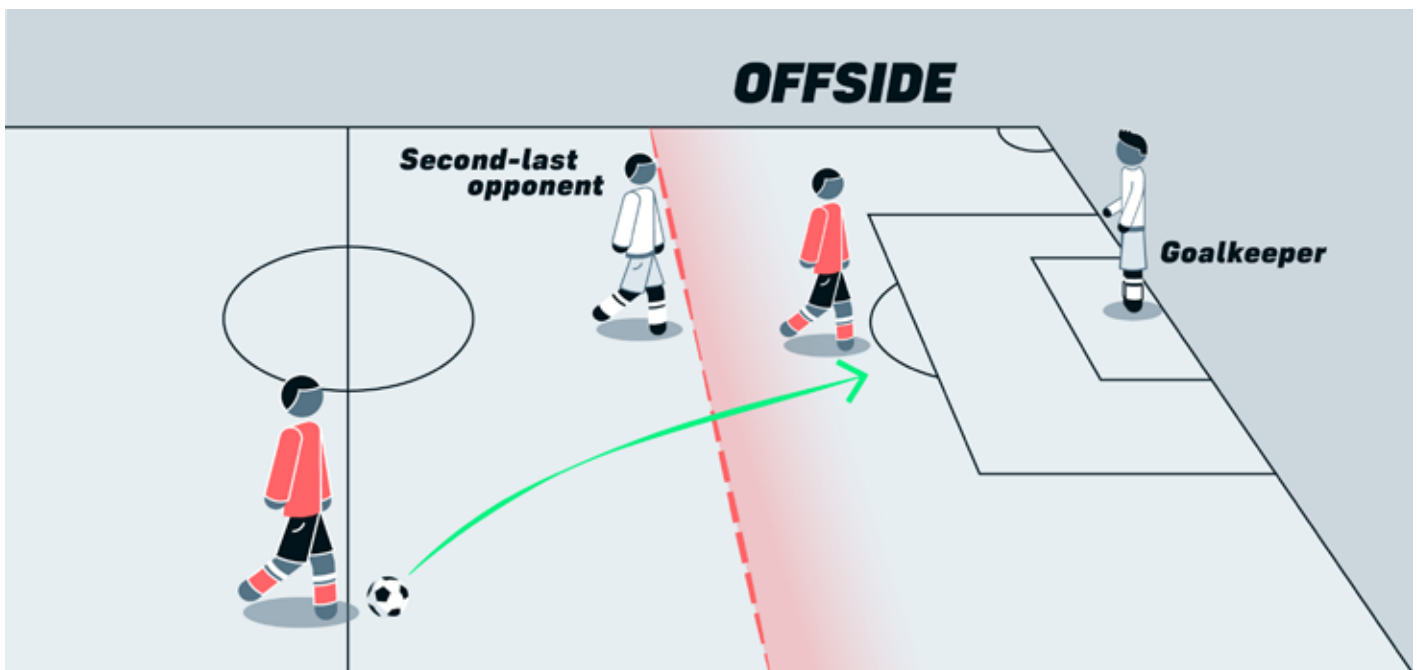
When is a player in an offside position in football?

A player is in an offside position when any part of their body* is:

- in the other team's half (being on the halfway line does not count as being in an offside position) and
- closer to the opponents' goal line than both:
 - > the second-last opponent, including the goalkeeper and
 - > the ball

**The hands and arms of all players (including the goalkeepers) are not included when determining whether a player is in an offside position.*

For offside offences, the player's position is judged at the moment the ball is played/touched by a team-mate.



When is a player not in an offside position in football?

A player is not in an offside position when they are:

- in their own half or on the halfway line
- behind or in line (level) with the second-last opponent (including the goalkeeper)
- behind or in line (level) with the ball
- in the opponents' goal, as long as they do not commit an offside offence, e.g. interfering with the goalkeeper or a defender

[more >>](#)

>> continued

OFFSIDE

Even if they are in an offside position, a player is not penalised for offside if they receive the ball:

- when the ball is deliberately played by an opponent, including the goalkeeper, unless it is a save, i.e. an attempt to stop the ball from going into or very close to the goal
- from an opponent's deliberate handball
- directly from a:
 - > throw-in
 - > corner kick
 - > goal kick
 - > dropped ball

What are offside offences in football?

There are three different types of offside offence:

- interfering with play by playing or touching the ball (with any part of the body)
- interfering with an opponent by:
 - > preventing them from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing their line of vision, especially the goalkeeper
 - > challenging them for the ball
 - > trying to play the ball when it is close and this affects an opponent
 - > making an obvious action/movement that clearly affects an opponent's ability to play the ball
- gaining an advantage by playing the ball or interfering with an opponent when the ball:
 - > rebounds or deflects off:
 - the goalpost or crossbar
 - an opponent
 - the referee or another match official
 - > has been deliberately saved by an opponent, i.e. in an attempt to stop the ball from going into or very close to the goal

If a player is penalised for offside, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team where the offence occurred (this can be in the player's own half if the player was in an offside position when the ball was played by a team-mate and then interfered with the play after returning to their own half).

What happens if...

a player is in an offside position?

A player in an offside position is not penalised if they do not commit an offside offence.

a player in an offside position is fouled without committing an offside offence?

The foul is penalised.

more >>

>> continued

OFFSIDE

a player in an offside position is fouled before committing an offside offence?

The foul is penalised.

a player deliberately leaves the pitch without the referee's permission?

- If it is a defending player:
 - > The player is considered to be on the goal line or touchline for the purposes of offside and is shown a yellow card at the next stoppage in play
- If it is an attacking player who does not get involved in the play:
 - > Play continues – no yellow card
- If it is an attacking player who re-enters the pitch and gets involved in the play:
 - > If the player was in an offside position, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team
 - > If the player was not in an offside position, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team and the player is shown a yellow card

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS

Who are the other match officials who assist the referee in football?

Depending on the competition level, the referee may be helped by other match officials, including:

- **on-field match officials:**
 - > two assistant referees
 - > one fourth official
 - > two additional assistant referees (AARs)
- **video match officials:**
 - > a video assistant referee and one or more assistant video assistant referees (AVARs)

They are usually neutral and qualified officials, but, at the lower levels of the game, they may simply be volunteers or people prepared to help, e.g. each team might provide someone to be an assistant referee.

The other match officials help the referee, but the referee is the only person who can make a decision.

What do the assistant referees do in football?

There are usually two assistant referees who are on the touchline on diagonally opposite sides of the pitch. They move up and down the defending team's half of the touchline and keep in line with the second-last defender (including the goalkeeper) and have a flag to communicate with the referee.

The assistant referees mainly help the referee with decisions relating to:

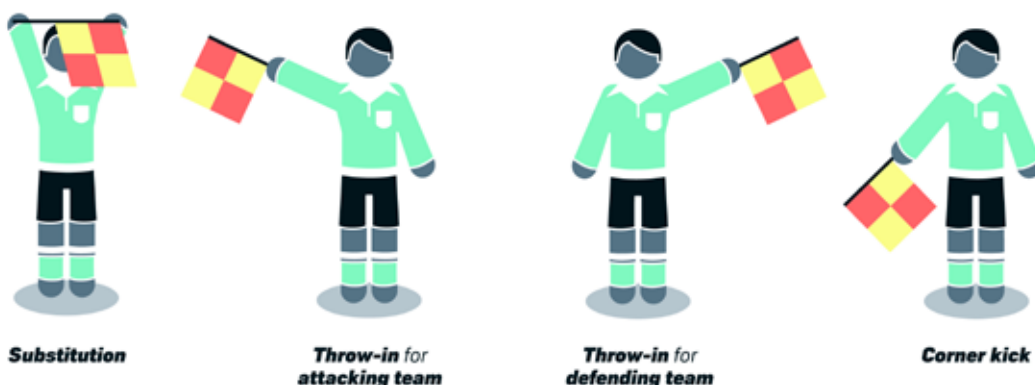
- the ball in and out of play (including whether the whole of the ball has crossed the line for a goal to be scored)
- goal kicks, corner kicks and throw-ins (including checking that the ball is in the right position and that throw-ins are taken correctly)
- offside

Neutral and qualified assistant referees may also help the referee with fouls and handball offences, especially if the referee cannot see an incident clearly.

Assistant referees may also help the referee with other matters, including:

- checking the pitch, goals and other equipment before the game
- substitutions
- keeping a record of goals, red and yellow cards, the number of substitutions made by a team, etc.
- timekeeping
- monitoring the behaviour of the coaches, substitutes, substituted players and other team officials (if close to the technical areas)

There are standard signals used by assistant referees:



>> *more*

>> continued

OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS



Free kick for attacking team



Free kick for defending team



Goal kick



Offside



Offside on the near side of the pitch



Offside in the middle of the pitch



Offside on the far side of the pitch

What does the fourth official do in football?

The fourth official stands in between the two technical areas and helps the referee in various ways, including:

- checking the pitch, goals and other equipment before the game
- giving advice about fouls, handball offences or other incidents that the referee cannot see clearly
- checking a substitute's kit and making sure that they enter the pitch at the halfway line, but only after the player being substituted has left the pitch and the referee has signalled for the substitute to enter the pitch
- controlling the coaches, substitutes, substituted players and other team officials
- keeping a record of goals, red and yellow cards, the number of substitutions made by a team, etc.
- indicating the minimum amount of additional time that the referee has decided will be played at the end of each half

If the referee or other match official is unable to continue due to injury, illness, etc., the fourth official usually takes over.

>> more

>> continued

OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS

What do the video match officials (VMOs) do in football?

The video assistant referee (VAR) system is an option that involves a qualified video assistant referee (VAR) helped by one or more qualified assistant video assistant referees (AVARs). The VAR and AVAR(s) watch replays of major incidents to check if anything serious has been missed or the referee has made a 'clear and obvious error' in relation to:

- goal/no goal
- penalty/no penalty
- red cards (including clearly incorrect second yellow cards)
- mistaken identity (when the wrong player is shown a red or yellow card)

In addition, competitions can decide whether to allow the VAR to review wrongly awarded corner kicks, but only if the decision can be changed immediately.

OTHER OFFENCES

What are the other main offences in football?

Apart from fouls and handball, there are other offences that can result in a free kick (direct or indirect) being awarded and in some instances a red or yellow card being shown.

Many of these are 'technical' offences against the Laws of the Game rather than offences committed against an opponent.

Which other offence in football is penalised with a direct free kick?

- Entering or re-entering the pitch without the referee's permission and interfering with the game or an opponent

Which other offences are penalised with an indirect free kick?

- Offside offences
- Verbal offences, especially arguing or protesting, swearing, etc.
- Verbally distracting an opponent (usually to put them off when they are trying to play the ball)
- Simulation, exaggeration or 'diving' to deceive the referee so that they might:
 - > award the team a free kick or penalty kick
 - > show a red or yellow card to an opponent
- A player takes a free kick, corner kick, goal kick, penalty kick, throw-in or kick-off and touches the ball again before another player has touched it (except an accidental double touch at a penalty if the ball enters the goal or the goalkeeper also offends)
- Entering, leaving or re-entering the pitch without the referee's permission but not interfering with the game or an opponent
- An attacking-team player is less than 1 m (1 yd) from a defensive 'wall' of three or more players when a free kick is taken
- The goalkeeper (in their penalty area):
 - > touches the ball again with their hand(s)/arm(s) after they had controlled it with their hand(s)/arm(s), released it and before it has touched another player (except after a save)
 - > touches the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a team-mate (backpass)
 - > touches the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) after receiving it directly from a throw-in by a team-mate
- Using a deliberate trick to flick the ball up and play it to the goalkeeper to get around the backpass Law
- Illegally marking the pitch
- Behaving unfairly (unsportingly)
- Showing a lack of respect for the game and/or its participants
- At a penalty kick:
 - > The kicker feints (pretends to kick the ball) at the end of their run-up, i.e. when their non-kicking/standing foot stops near the penalty spot
 - > An attacking-team player enters the penalty area before the kick is taken, the kick is missed/saved and the player has an impact, e.g. plays the ball after it rebounded off the goalkeeper, goalpost(s) or crossbar
 - > The wrong player takes the kick
 - > The penalty is kicked backwards
- After the referee has played the advantage when a player should have been sent off (red card or second yellow card) and the offending player then gets involved in the game without committing a direct-free-kick or penalty-kick offence
- A player commits an offence off the pitch against one of their own team-mates (including substitutes) or one of their own team officials

OUTSIDE AGENTS ON THE PITCH

What is an outside agent in football?

An outside agent is anyone or anything that should not be on the pitch or interfering with play during the game. This can include:

- a person who is not a player, substitute, team official or match official (e.g. a spectator or ball boy/ball girl)
- an animal
- an object thrown by a spectator
- a structure, e.g. an overhanging branch

What should the referee do if an outside agent interferes with play in football?

The referee should try to make sure that any outside agent does not interfere with play, the players, the referee or the other match officials. This may involve stopping play.

If, while the ball is in play, the game is stopped because of interference from an outside agent, play restarts with a dropped ball for the team that would have retained or gained possession of the ball (including from the restart if the ball would have gone out of play). If this is not clear to the referee, the ball is dropped for a player of the team that last touched the ball. The ball is dropped at the place where it was when play was stopped.

What happens if...

there is an outside agent on the pitch but not interfering with the game?

The referee can allow the game to continue.

there is an outside agent interfering with the game?

The referee stops play and the outside agent must be removed from the pitch. Play restarts with a dropped ball at the position of the interference.

an outside agent interferes with the ball when it is going into the goal but it still goes into the goal?

The goal can be awarded if the interference did not stop any defenders or the goalkeeper from playing the ball.

an outside agent interferes with a penalty kick (including during penalties) before the ball reaches the goal/goalkeeper?

The kick is retaken.

>> *more*

>> continued

OUTSIDE AGENTS ON THE PITCH

an outside agent interferes with a penalty kick after the ball rebounds off the goalpost(s), crossbar or goalkeeper and has no chance of going into the goal?

Penalty kick: Play restarts with a dropped ball.

During penalties: The kick is recorded as missed.

the referee stops play for an offence committed by a player against an outside agent?

Play restarts with a dropped ball, unless the player left the pitch without the referee's permission, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team.

PENALTIES (PENALTY SHOOT-OUT)

What are penalties (penalty shoot-out) in football?

Penalties (penalty shoot-out) are taken after a match has ended (with or without extra time, depending on the competition rules), the scores are level and a winning team is needed.

Each team takes up to five kicks, which are taken alternately. If one team scores more goals than the other team could possibly score even if they were to score all their remaining kicks, they are the winners. If the initial five kicks do not produce a winner, the penalties continue into 'sudden death', where single kicks are taken alternately until one team has scored more than the other team after the same number of kicks.

What should happen during penalties (penalty shoot-out) in football?

The teams take alternate kicks. Players cannot take another kick until all their team-mates have taken one.

If a player is not ready to take a kick (e.g. they are off the pitch), another player who has not already taken a kick must take it.

If all the players have taken a kick and the scores are still level, a second round of kicks are taken – the teams can change the order of the kickers for this round.

If the kicker commits an offence, their kick is recorded as missed (whether or not they score).

Yellow cards and warnings issued to players and team officials during the game are not carried forward into penalties, but a player who is shown a red card during the game cannot take part.

Players, substitutes, substituted players and team officials can be shown a red or yellow card during penalties.

Before the kicks start

Only players who are playing at the end of the game (including those who are off the pitch injured, changing boots, etc.) are allowed to take part. The teams do not have to tell the referee the order of their kickers.

Everyone else (substitutes, team officials, etc.) must be off the pitch.

If one team has more players than the other team (e.g. because a player was sent off or injured and not replaced), they must reduce their team to the same number as the other team and the referee must be told which player(s) is/are not taking part.

No substitutions are allowed except for a goalkeeper who is ill/injured.

A goalkeeper who is ill/injured before or during penalties can be substituted if their team has not used all its substitutes or they have a player who had been excluded to make the number of players in each team equal. Otherwise, one of the on-field players must replace the goalkeeper.

The referee:

- tosses a coin to decide which goal to use (unless one goal cannot be used, e.g. lots of water on the pitch, security reasons, etc.)
- tosses the coin again and the captain that wins the toss chooses whether to take the first or second kick

During the kicks

All players except for the two goalkeepers and the kicker must be in the centre circle. Each kicker taking a kick must be clearly identified.

The ball:

- must be touching or overhanging the centre of the penalty spot
- must be stationary (not moving) before the kick is taken

>> *more*

>> continued

PENALTIES (PENALTY SHOOT-OUT)

The goalkeeper:

- must face the ball
- must be on the goal line and between the goalposts
- can move along the goal line and/or jump up and down, as long as at least part of each foot is on or above the line, until the ball is kicked
- must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar or goal net
- must have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind the goal line when the ball is kicked

The other goalkeeper must wait on the junction of the goal line and the penalty area line (on the same side as the assistant referee, if there is one). Any of the players taking part in the penalties may change places with the goalkeeper, as long as the referee is informed.

The kicker:

- can stop and start during their run-up to the ball
- must not stop or feint (pretend to kick the ball) at the end of their run-up – they must kick the ball immediately
- must kick the ball forwards (but can backheel it towards the goal)
- cannot touch the ball again

The referee:

- makes sure that the ball is in the correct position
- blows the whistle for the kick to be taken
- carefully watches the kicker and the goalkeeper (the assistant referee will usually also watch the goalkeeper and check whether the ball crosses the goal line)
- keeps a record of each kicker (name and/or number), as well as who scores and who misses

The kick is completed when the ball:

- enters the goal
- stops moving
- is clearly saved by the goalkeeper
- rebounds off a goalpost, the crossbar or a corner flagpost and has no chance of going into the goal
- goes out of play

or

- when the referee stops play for an offence

What happens if...

the ball is moving or is not touching/overhanging the penalty spot when the kick is taken?

The kick must be retaken.

the goalkeeper moves off the goal line early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken if it is saved. The kick is not retaken if it misses the goal and the kick was not affected by the goalkeeper's movement. If the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper must be warned for the first offence and shown a yellow card for any further offences.

more >>

>> continued

PENALTIES (PENALTY SHOOT-OUT)

the kicker feints at the end of their run-up and then kicks the ball?

The kick is recorded as missed and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

the kicker stops during the run-up, starts again and kicks the ball?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed.

the kicker stops and does not kick the ball?

The kick is retaken unless the kicker was guilty of 'illegal' feinting.

the kicker deliberately touches the ball again before anyone else e.g. when it rebounds from the goalpost / crossbar?

The kick is recorded as missed.

the kicker accidentally kicks the ball with both feet simultaneously or the ball immediately touches the non-kicking foot/leg?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: The kick is recorded as missed unless the goalkeeper also commits an offence.

the kicker does not kick the ball forwards?

The kick is recorded as missed.

the ball bursts/stops before reaching the goal/goalkeeper?

The kick must be retaken.

there is outside interference with the ball before it reaches the goal?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken unless the goalkeeper could not have saved it.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

PENALTY AREA

What is the penalty area in football?

The penalty area (also known as the penalty box) is the larger rectangular area at each end of the pitch in front of the goal. It has a smaller rectangle, the goal area, and a penalty spot inside it. The goalkeeper can handle the ball inside the penalty area.

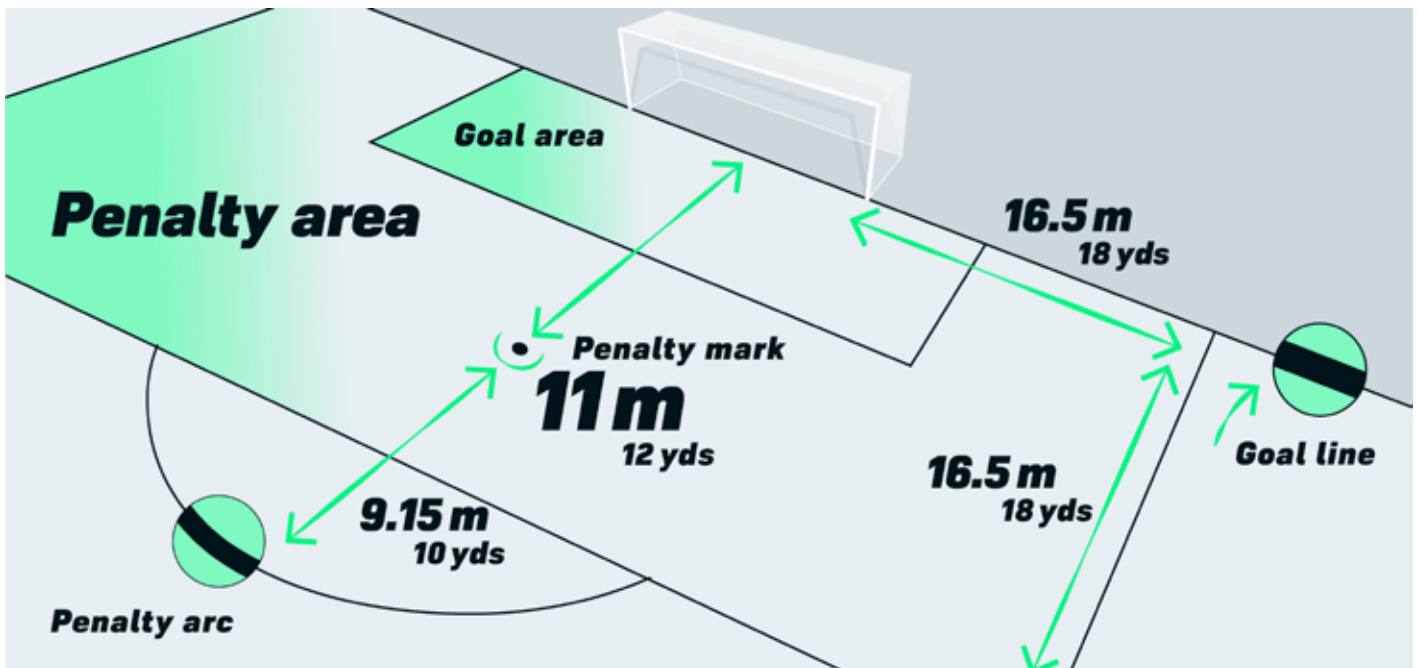
Handball offences and fouls committed by a team in their own penalty area result in a penalty kick being awarded to the opposition, which is taken from the penalty spot. Apart from the defending-team goalkeeper and the player taking the penalty kick, all other players must be outside the penalty area and penalty arc until the kick has been taken.

What are the requirements for the penalty area in football?

Two boundary lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, 16.5 m (18 yds) from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the pitch for 16.5 m (18 yds) and are joined by a line running parallel with the goal line.

A penalty spot is marked at 11 m (12 yds) from the middle of the goal line. It can be of any shape but is usually circular.

A semicircle (penalty arc) is drawn from the edge of the penalty area, 9.15 m (10 yds) from the penalty spot



For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

PENALTY KICK

What is a penalty kick in football?

A penalty kick is awarded to the other team when a player commits a direct-free-kick offence (usually a foul or handball) inside their own penalty area. A goal can be scored directly from a penalty kick.

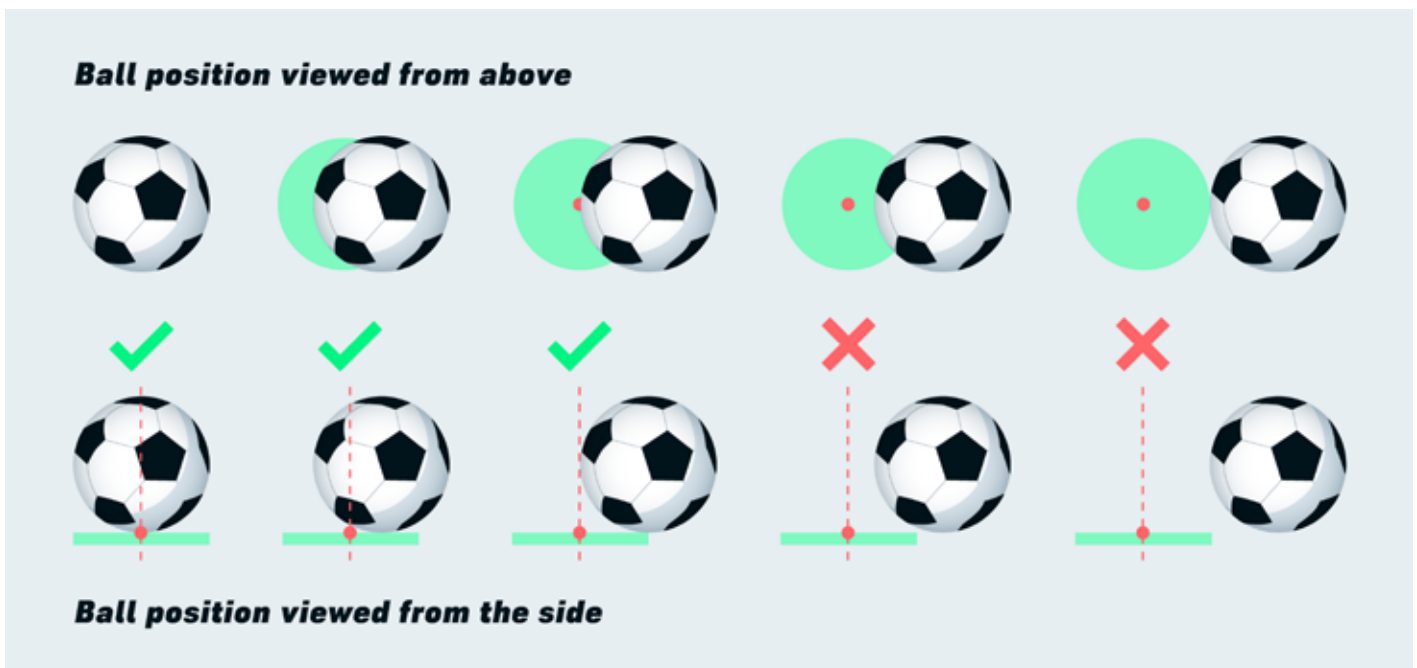
What happens at a penalty kick in football?

All players, except for the goalkeeper and the kicker, must be outside the penalty area and the semicircle (penalty arc), which is 9.15 m/10 yds from the penalty spot. They cannot go inside the penalty arc or penalty area until the ball is in play (i.e. the ball is kicked and clearly moves).

The kicker must be clearly identified so that the referee and the goalkeeper know who is taking the kick.

The ball:

- must be touching or overhanging the centre of the penalty spot
- must be stationary (not moving) until the kick is taken



The goalkeeper:

- must face the ball
- must be on the goal line and between the goalposts
- can move along the goal line and/or jump up and down, as long as at least part of each foot is on or above the line until the ball is kicked
- must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar or goal net
- must have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind the goal line when the ball is kicked

>> [more](#)

>> continued

PENALTY KICK

The kicker:

- can stop and start during their run-up to the ball
- must not stop or feint (pretend to kick the ball) at the end of their run-up – they must kick the ball immediately
- must kick the ball forwards (but can backheel it towards the goal)
- cannot touch the ball again until another player has touched it

The referee:

- makes sure that the ball is in the correct position
- makes sure that all the players are in the correct position
- blows the whistle for the kick to be taken
- watches the kicker and the goalkeeper (the assistant referee will usually also watch the goalkeeper and check whether the ball crosses the goal line)

If there are no offences*:

- When the ball is held by the goalkeeper, play continues
- When the ball rebounds off the goalkeeper, a goalpost, the crossbar or a corner flagpost, the ball can be played by any player except the kicker, who cannot touch the ball again until after it has touched another player
- When the ball goes out of play, play is restarted with a goal kick or corner kick (depending on who last touched it)

*See 'what happens if...' section (below) for the referee's decision if an offence is committed.

If the half is extended to allow a penalty kick to be taken, the half ends after the kick has been taken and when the referee stops play:

- because of an offence committed by the attacking team
- when the ball:
 - > goes into the goal
 - > stops moving (including being held by the goalkeeper)
 - > rebounds off the goalkeeper, a goalpost, the crossbar or a corner flagpost and has no chance of going into the goal
 - > goes out of play
 - > is touched after the kick by any player (except the defending goalkeeper)

What happens if...

the ball is moving or is not touching/overhanging the penalty spot when the kick is taken?

The kick must be retaken.

any defenders enter the penalty arc or penalty area early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: No action is taken unless the encroachment had an impact, in which case the kick must be retaken.

>> more

>> continued

PENALTY KICK

any attackers enter the penalty arc or penalty area early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded unless the encroachment had an impact, in which case the kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: No action is taken unless the encroachment had an impact, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

any attacker(s) and defender(s) enter the penalty arc or penalty area early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded unless the encroachment by the attacker(s) had an impact, in which case the kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: No action is taken unless the encroachment by the defender(s) had an impact, in which case the kick must be retaken.

the goalkeeper moves off the goal line early?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken if it is saved. The kick is not retaken if it misses the goal and the kicker was not affected by the goalkeeper's movement. If the kick is retaken, the goalkeeper must be warned for the first offence in the game and shown a yellow card for any subsequent offences in the game.

the kicker feints at the end of their run-up and then kicks the ball?

An indirect free kick is awarded and the kicker is shown a yellow card.

the kicker stops and does not kick the ball?

The kick is retaken unless the kicker was guilty of 'illegal' feinting,

the kicker stops during the run-up, starts again and kicks the ball?

Kick scored: A goal is awarded.

Kick missed/saved: The game carries on or a goal kick or corner kick is awarded.

the kicker deliberately touches the ball again before anyone else e.g. when it rebounds from the goalpost/crossbar?

An indirect free kick is awarded.

>> more

>> continued

PENALTY KICK

the kicker accidentally kicks the ball with both feet or the ball immediately touches the non-kicking foot/leg?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken.

Kick missed/saved: Play is stopped and restarted with an indirect free kick (unless the goalkeeper also offends; in that case, the kick is retaken).

the kicker does not kick the ball forwards?

An indirect free kick is awarded.

the kicker and the goalkeeper both commit an offence?

The kick is retaken unless the kicker was guilty of 'illegal' feinting, kicked the ball backwards or deliberately played the ball a second time.

another player (not the identified kicker) takes the kick?

An indirect free kick is awarded and the player who took the kick is shown a yellow card.

the ball bursts before reaching the goal/goalkeeper?

The kick must be retaken.

there is outside interference with the ball before it reaches the goal?

Kick scored: The kick must be retaken unless it is deemed that the goalkeeper could not have saved it.

Kick missed/saved: The kick must be retaken.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

PITCH

What is a football pitch?

The pitch, also known as the field of play, is the playing area for a football match. It has standardised markings and a number of clearly designated areas, including the corner area and corner flags, goal area, penalty area, referee review area (RRA) and technical area.

At each end of the pitch there is a penalty area, a penalty arc, a goal area and a goal. There are four corner areas and four corner flags. The pitch is divided into two equal halves by a halfway line. There is a centre spot at the midpoint of the halfway line and a centre circle with a radius of 9.15 m (10 yds) marked around it. At higher levels of the game, there may be two technical areas and an RRA.

What are the requirements for a football pitch?

The pitch must be rectangular and marked with clear, unbroken lines, which are usually white but can be any colour. The pitch is usually natural (grass or soil) but, depending on the competition rules, may also be artificial (artificial turf, rubber or concrete) or a hybrid.

All lines on the pitch are part of the area they enclose. For example, if a foul is committed on one of the lines forming the boundary of the penalty area, it is considered to have occurred inside the penalty area and a penalty kick is awarded.

All lines must be of the same width and must not be more than 12 cm (5 ins) wide.

The longer lines on the side of the pitch are the touchlines. The shorter lines at the end of the pitch are the goal lines.

In adults' football, the pitch dimensions are:

- **Touchline:** 90 to 120 m (100 to 130 yds)
- **Goal line:** 45 to 90 m (50 to 100 yds)

There is a more limited range of permitted pitch dimensions for international matches, and pitches for youth/children's football are usually smaller than for adults' football.

No advertising is allowed on the pitch, including inside the goals, technical areas and the RRA.

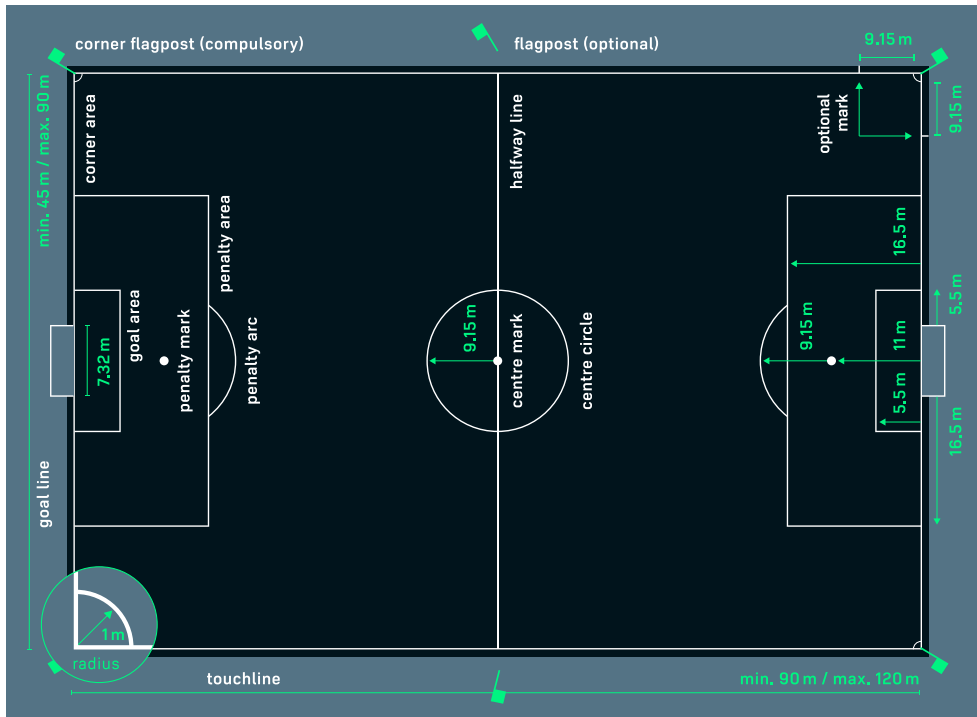
A player who makes unauthorised marks on the pitch must be shown a yellow card.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

PITCH

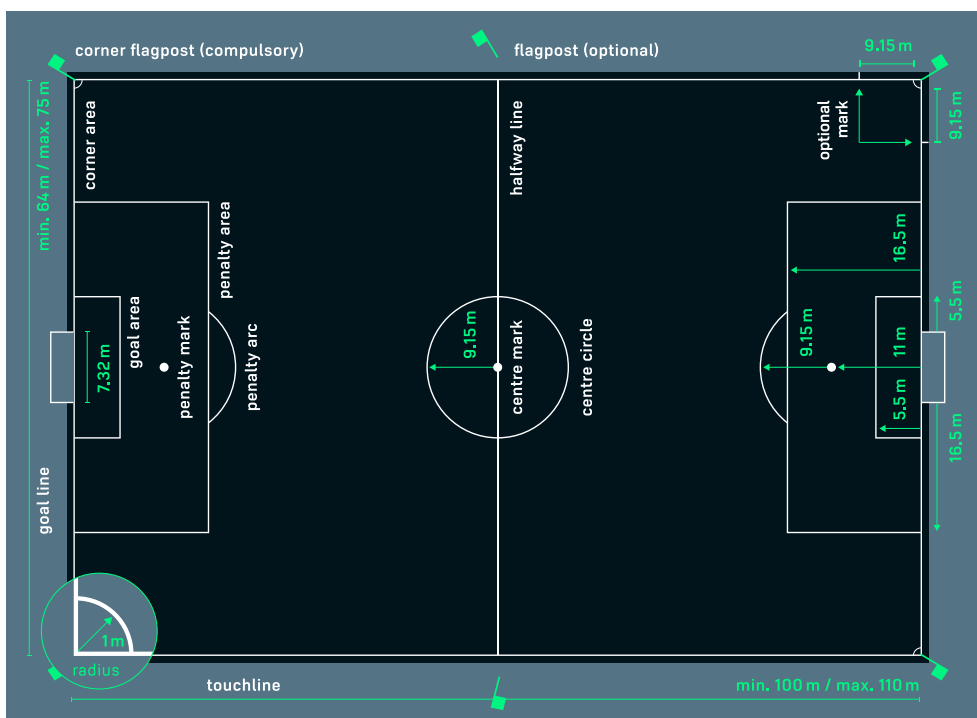
National

For measurements in yards click [here](#).



International

For measurements in yards click [here](#).



PLAYERS & SUBSTITUTES

What are players and substitutes in football?

A football game is played by two teams of no more than 11 players each. A game cannot start or continue if a team has fewer than seven players except where this occurs because of a temporary dismissal or because a player is off the pitch for one minute in accordance with the 'Time-limited substitution protocol' and the 'Off-field treatment and assessment protocol'.

Substitutes are extra players who are off the pitch (on the bench or in the technical area, if there is one) and may replace team-mates during a game. This process is known as a substitution.

Each team must have a goalkeeper and a captain.

What are the requirements for players and substitutes in football?

A team list with the names of all the players and substitutes (and sometimes team officials) is usually given to the referee before kick-off. If the competition rules do not require a team list, the referee must be given the names of the substitutes before kick-off.

An outfield player may change places with the goalkeeper as long as the referee is informed before the change is made and the change occurs when the game has been stopped by the referee.

Both teams must wear clearly distinguishable players' kits.

What happens if...

a team has fewer than 11 players before the game starts?

The game can go ahead as long as the team has at least seven players. Any player arriving after kick-off may play, as long as their name was on the team list given to the referee before the game.

a team is reduced to fewer than seven players during the game (except where this occurs temporarily as outlined above)?

The game must be abandoned and the referee must submit a report to the appropriate authorities after the game.

a team has too many players on the pitch?

The referee must stop the game, reduce the team to the correct number of players and submit a report to the appropriate authorities after the game.

>> *more*

>> continued

PLAYERS & SUBSTITUTES

a team has too many players on the pitch and scores a goal?

The extra player must be removed from the pitch and:

- if the game has not restarted, the goal is disallowed and play is restarted with a direct free kick to the other team from the position of the extra player
- if the game has restarted, the goal is allowed, play continues and the matter is reported to the appropriate authorities after the game

See also 'Substitutes or team officials' under 'Interference on the pitch'.

a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission (except at half-time or the break before the start of extra time or penalties)?

Play continues and both players are shown a yellow card the next time there is a stoppage in play.

PLAYERS' KIT

What is the players' kit in football?

Compulsory kit

Players must wear the following:

- a shirt with long or short sleeves
- shorts
- socks (if tape is used, it must be the same colour as the part of the sock it is covering)
- shinguards (the size and material are the player's responsibility)
- footwear (football boots are not compulsory)

Each goalkeeper must wear a different colour from the other players of both teams, the referee and other match officials and, ideally, the other team's goalkeeper. Goalkeepers can wear tracksuit bottoms.

The captain must wear an armband which is either supplied or approved by the competition organisers or has a simple design.

Optional kit

Players can wear any of the following:

- undershirts, which must be the same colour or have the same pattern as the shirt sleeves or cuffs (end part of the sleeve)
- undershorts, which must be the same colour as the shorts or their trim (lowest part of the shorts)
- other equipment, e.g. caps (goalkeepers), gloves, sports spectacles and protectors (knee, head, etc.) can be worn, as long as they are not dangerous and are made of soft material
- head covers, which must not be dangerous or attached to the shirt
- fitness or data trackers (not on the wrist)

Players and match officials are allowed to wear non-dangerous accessories as long as they are safely and securely covered.

The match officials inspect the players' equipment before the game begins and the substitutes' equipment before they enter the pitch. If a player is wearing dangerous accessories or equipment, the referee must ensure that the player removes the item.

Players, substitutes and team officials are not allowed to wear (or reveal) anything with a political, religious or personal slogan, statement or image. This includes anything that could be considered offensive, insulting, abusive, provocative or discriminatory. Any such item should be removed. A yellow card is not shown, but a report must be sent to the relevant disciplinary authorities after the game.

What happens if...

both teams have the same colour shirt as each other and no other colour is available?

The game cannot take place – competition rules usually state which team must change if there is a clash of colours.

both teams have the same colour socks as each other and no other colour is available?

The referee may decide to allow the game to take place.

>> *more*

>> continued

PLAYERS' KIT

both teams have the same colour shorts as each other and no other colour is available?

The game can take place.

both goalkeepers have the same colour kit as each other and no other colour is available?

The game can take place.

one or both goalkeepers have the same colour kit as the referee and no other colour is available?

The game can take place.

clothing/equipment has blood on it?

The clothing/equipment must be changed.

a player is wearing incorrect or dangerous equipment/accessories before the kick-off?

The incorrect or dangerous equipment/accessory must be removed before they can play.

a player is wearing incorrect or dangerous equipment/accessories during the game?

The player must leave the pitch and remove the incorrect or dangerous equipment/accessory (it is not necessary to stop play). Once the equipment/accessory has been removed and the player has been checked by a match official, the player must wait for a signal from the referee before coming back onto the pitch. If they come back without permission, they are shown a yellow card and an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team (or a direct free kick or penalty kick if they interfere with play).

a player wears incorrect equipment more than once during a game?

The player is shown a yellow card.

a player accidentally loses their footwear or shinguard?

The player can continue playing and can score. The footwear/shinguard must be replaced as soon as possible and no later than the next time the game stops.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

PLAYING DISTANCE

What is playing distance in football?

Playing distance refers to a player's proximity to the ball. A player is deemed to be within playing distance if they could touch the ball by stretching out their foot/leg or jumping. For a goalkeeper, it includes whether they could touch the ball by stretching out their hand/arm.

When is playing distance important in football?

A player can use their body to protect the ball from an opponent if the ball is within playing distance, as long as they do not use their hand/arm to hold off the opponent.

If the ball is within playing distance, a player can be fairly charged (shoulder to shoulder) by an opponent.

What happens if...

a player uses their body to shield the ball or block an opponent when the ball is not within playing distance?

An indirect free kick is awarded if there is no contact; a direct free kick is awarded if there is contact.

a player impedes an opponent's progress by blocking, obstructing, slowing down or forcing a change of direction when the ball is not within playing distance?

An indirect free kick is awarded if there is no contact; a direct free kick is awarded if there is contact.

PLAYING TIME

How long is a football match?

A football match consists of two equal halves, usually of 45 minutes each. At lower levels, especially in youth/children's football, the halves may be shorter. At the end of each half, the referee will add on the time that was 'lost' because of substitutions, injuries, disciplinary action, goal celebrations, time-wasting, etc.

Where a game requires a winner and the scores are level at the end of the game, competition rules may require two equal halves of extra time to be played.

Where teams want to have shorter halves (because of fading light, a late kick-off, etc.), both teams and the referee must agree before the game starts on how long the two halves will last.

Between the two halves, there is a half-time break of up to 15 minutes. The half-time break can only be cancelled with the agreement of all players and the referee.

Any change to the length of the halves and the half-time break must comply with competition rules and should be reported to the competition organisers after the game.

How is additional time calculated in football?

At the end of each half (in normal time and extra time), the referee must add on all time 'lost' due to stoppages, which are usually the result of:

- substitutions
- injuries
- time-wasting
- goal celebrations
- red and yellow cards
- drinks and cooling breaks
- delays for video assistant referee checks and reviews
- other major delays due to spectators entering the pitch, floodlight failure, etc.

At the end of each half, the fourth official (if there is one) uses a board (usually the substitution board) to show the amount of additional time decided by the referee. If there is no fourth official/substitution board, the referee should indicate the amount of additional time, usually with their fingers.

The referee:

- cannot reduce the amount of additional time once it has been decided
- must increase the amount of additional time for any further time 'lost' due to stoppages during additional time itself

If a penalty kick is awarded at the end of a half, time must be allowed for the penalty kick to be taken.

Extra time

Where a game requires a winning team and the scores are level at the end of normal time, competition rules may require two halves of extra time to be played, usually 15 minutes each, with a half-time break.

If the scores are still level after extra time, the game will go to penalties.

There is a break before the start of extra time and before penalties.

>> *more*

>> continued

PLAYING TIME

What happens if...

the referee blows the whistle too early at the end of a half but realises their mistake while still on the pitch?

The referee must resume the game and play the correct time.

the referee blows the whistle too early at the end of the first half and does not realise their mistake until after they have left the pitch for the half-time interval?

The referee must resume the game after the half-time interval without changing sides and play the correct time of the first half. The teams then change sides, and the game is restarted with the kick-off for the second half.

the referee blows the whistle too early at the end of the second half and does not realise their mistake until after they have left the pitch?

The referee must resume the game and play the correct time for the second half.

the playing conditions are not very good and the half-time interval needs to be shortened in order to complete the game?

This is allowed if both teams and the referee agree.

a match goes to extra time?

The same principles apply as in normal time (both halves are of the same duration, there is a half-time break and the referee allows additional time at the end of each half).

the half is extended for a penalty kick to be taken or retaken?

The half ends when the referee stops play for an offence by the attacking team or when the ball:

- goes into the goal;
- stops moving (including being held by the goalkeeper);
- rebounds off the goalkeeper, goalpost(s), crossbar or corner flagpost and has no chance of going into the goal;
- goes out of play; or
- is touched after the kick by any player (except the defending goalkeeper).

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, [click here](#).

RED CARDS

What is a red card in football?

A red card is a disciplinary measure used by the referee. It signals that someone has been sent off (dismissed) and cannot take any further part in the game.

Red cards can be shown to players, substitutes, substituted players, coaches and other team officials.

When can red cards be shown in football?

A person can be shown a red card from the time the referee goes onto the pitch for the start of the match until the referee leaves the pitch after the end of the game, including during half-time, the break between full-time and extra time, extra time, half-time in extra time and penalties.

If a player commits a red-card offence between the time the referee goes onto the pitch for the pre-match inspection and entering the pitch to start the game, no red card is shown but the player cannot play in the game and the incident is reported to the relevant disciplinary authorities after the game.

If the offence is committed:

- before the team lists are submitted, the player cannot be included on the team list and cannot take part in the game
- between the submission of the team lists and the kick-off, the player can be replaced by one of the substitutes so that the team starts with 11 players; the substitute cannot be replaced but the team does not lose a substitution

Red cards must be shown during a stoppage in the game and not while the ball is in play.

What are red-card offences in football?

A red card is shown to a player, substitute or substituted player who:

- denies the other team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing:
 - > a deliberate handball offence (except a goalkeeper in their own penalty area)
 - > a non-deliberate handball offence outside their own penalty area
 - > a foul (except when a penalty kick is awarded for a foul that was an attempt to play or challenge for the ball or for a non-deliberate handball offence, in which case a yellow card is shown)
 - > any other offence
- commits serious foul play (a serious or dangerous foul)
- is guilty of violent conduct (punching, kicking, head-butting, etc.)
- spits at or bites someone
- uses language or behaves in a way that is offensive, insulting or abusive
- receives a second yellow card in the same game

A red card is shown to a team official who:

- delays the other team's restart of the game, e.g. by holding onto the ball, kicking it away or obstructing an opponent
- leaves their technical area or enters the pitch to argue with the referee or other match official
- acts aggressively or interferes with play or a player from the other team
- enters the other team's technical area and behaves aggressively
- is guilty of violent conduct (punching, kicking, head-butting, etc.)
- spits at or bites someone

>> *more*

>> *continued*

RED CARDS

- throws or kicks something onto the pitch
- is shown a second yellow card in the same game
- uses language or behaves in a way that is offensive, insulting or abusive
- incorrectly uses electronic or communication equipment and behaves inappropriately as a result

If someone in the technical area commits a red-card offence and cannot be identified, the senior coach present in the technical area is shown the red card (as the person responsible for the people in the technical area).

If the referee plays advantage following a red-card offence that denies the opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, as soon as play stops, a yellow card is shown instead of a red card, as the advantage allowed the attack to continue. If a goal is scored, no card is shown.

If the referee plays advantage following any other red-card offence (which should not usually happen because of the risk of confrontation):

- the red card must be shown when the game next stops or
- if the offender gets involved with the game again, the referee must stop play, award an indirect free kick and send the player off

Details about all red cards must be reported after the game to the relevant disciplinary authorities.

REFEREE

What is a referee in football?

Every football game must have a referee who applies the Laws to control the game, players and team officials.

The referee's main responsibility is to apply the Laws to make sure the game is played fairly and safely. The referee may be helped by other match officials, but the referee always makes the final decision, which must always be respected.

What is the role of the referee in football?

When applying the Laws/Rules, the referee must consider the 'spirit' of the Law, i.e. what is its main purpose and what is the fairest outcome, especially when something happens that is not directly covered by the Laws/Rules.

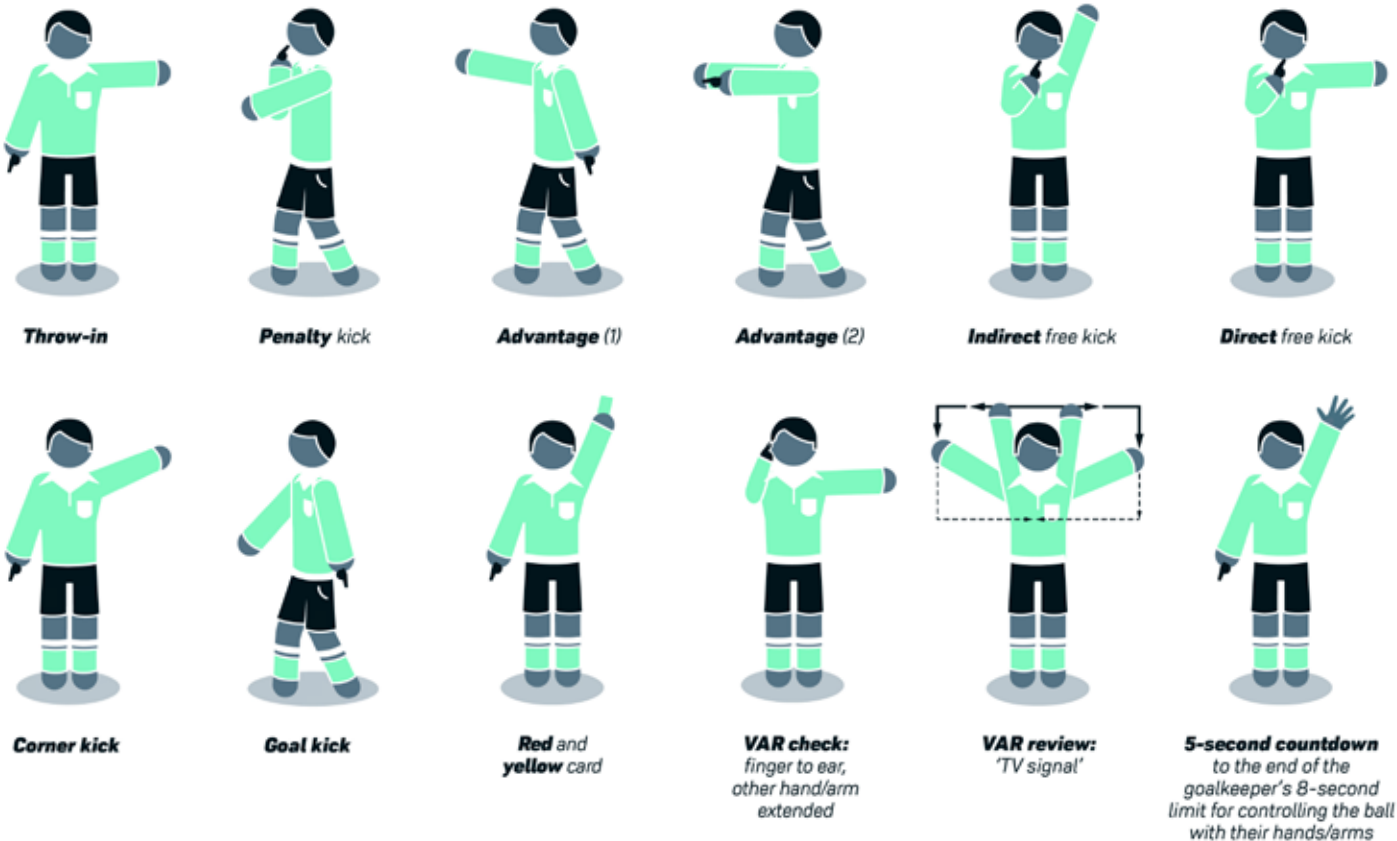
The referee has the authority to award free kicks and penalty kicks and to decide which team gets a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick or dropped ball. They may also show a red card or yellow card for some offences.

In some lower-level competitions, a yellow card results in a temporary dismissal (sin bin) with the player spending some time off the pitch before returning to the game.

The referee must keep a record of the main events in the game, particularly the goals, substitutions and red and yellow cards.

If the referee becomes ill or injured and cannot continue, the game is abandoned unless the competition rules allow one of the other match officials (assistant referee or fourth official) to take over.

There are a number of standard signals used by the referee.



>> more

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REFEREE

When is the whistle used in football?

The whistle is used to stop the game, usually for a foul, handball, offside, injury or to signal that the ball has gone out of play when it is not clear.

It is usually only used to restart the game in important situations, e.g. after a goal, red or yellow card, injury or substitution, or for an attacking free kick or penalty kick.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

REFEREE REVIEW AREA

What is the referee review area (RRA) in football?

When the video assistant referee (VAR) system is being used, a referee review area (RRA) is marked outside the pitch, usually near the halfway line.

The RRA is for 'on-field reviews', where the referee watches replays provided by the VAR.

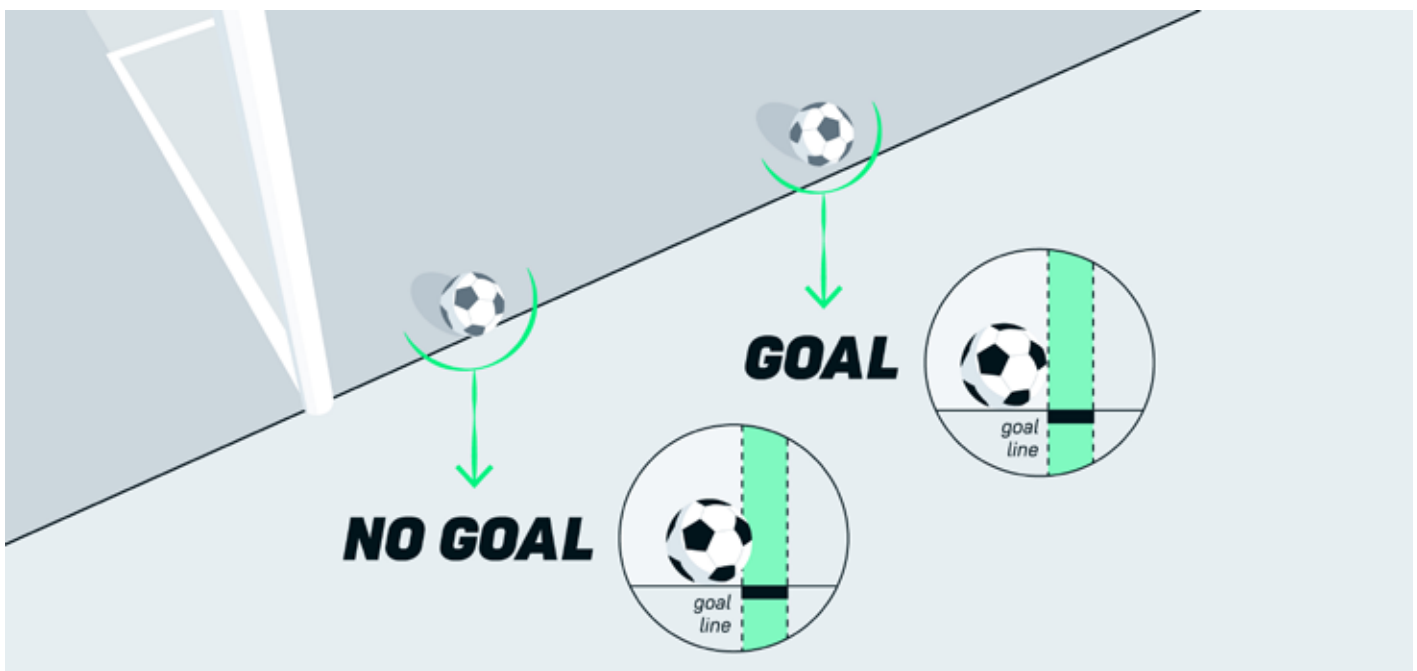
For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).



SCORING A GOAL

When is a goal scored in football?

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball crosses the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar and no offence has been committed by the attacking (scoring) team. If any part of the ball is still on, overhanging or above the goal line, a goal has not been scored.



The decision as to whether a goal has been scored is made by the referee, who may be helped by the assistant referees. In some competitions, the referee may also be helped by goal line technology (GLT) or the video assistant referee (VAR) system.

What happens if...

a small part of the ball has not crossed the goal line?

A goal is not awarded.

an attacking-team player commits an offence (e.g. handball, foul, offside) before the ball crosses the goal line?

The goal is disallowed.

>> more

>> continued

SCORING A GOAL

the referee awards a goal and then finds out (e.g. from an assistant referee, fourth official or the VAR) that an offence was committed by the attacking team before the ball crossed the goal line?

If the game has not restarted, the goal is disallowed.

If the game has restarted, the goal stands and the matter is reported to the appropriate authorities after the game.

a defending-team player commits an offence (e.g. handball, foul) before the ball crosses the goal line?

The referee does not penalise the offence, plays the advantage and the goal is awarded.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

SEMI-AUTOMATED OFFSIDE TECHNOLOGY (SAOT)

What is semi-automated offside technology in football?

Semi-automated offside technology (SAOT) is used to alert the video assistant referee (VAR) – and, in some set-ups, the assistant referees too – when a player is in an offside position.

How is simulation punished in football?

The SAOT system includes cameras and/or sensors and computers that automatically detect whether a player is in an offside position and can send a signal to the VAR and to each assistant referee's watch.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

SIMULATION

What is simulation in football?

Simulation is when a player fakes or exaggerates an action with the aim of deceiving the referee into awarding their team a free kick or penalty kick and/or punishing an opponent by showing them a yellow or red card.

A player can be guilty of simulation in a number of ways, including:

- pretending to have been:
 - > fouled, to get a free kick or penalty kick
 - > kicked, punched, etc. so that an opponent is shown a red or yellow card
- exaggerating:
 - > the seriousness of a foul
 - > the strength/effect of a kick, push, etc.
- holding the wrong part of the body after an incident (such as a foul, push, etc.), for example:
 - > holding the knee when the foul was on the ankle
 - > holding the head/face after being pushed in the chest

How is simulation punished in football?

If a player is guilty of simulation, the referee awards an indirect free kick (if play is stopped for the offence) and the player is shown a yellow card.

SUBSTITUTES OR TEAM OFFICIALS ON THE PITCH

Who is not allowed on the pitch during a football match?

Substitutes, substituted players and team officials (including coaches, doctors, physios, etc.) are not allowed onto the pitch without the referee's permission.

They must remain in the technical area (if there is no technical area, they must stay on the side of the pitch outside the touchline), and they may only go onto the pitch after receiving a signal from the referee (except in an emergency, e.g. serious injury).

A player who has gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, for instance, must wait for the referee's signal to return, which can be given whilst the ball is in play. If the game is stopped, the player can return to the pitch from the goal line or touchline; but if the ball is in play, the player can only return to the pitch from the touchline.

If a team scores a goal when one of their substitutes, substituted players, team officials or players who have gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, etc. is on the pitch without permission and the referee finds out before the game is restarted, the referee must:

- disallow the goal
- take the correct disciplinary action (yellow card for a player, substitute or substituted player; red card for a team official)
- have the person removed from the pitch if they are a substitute, substituted player or team official
- restart play with a direct free kick from where the offending person was discovered by the referee
- If the referee does not find out about the offending person until after the game has restarted, the referee must:
 - allow the goal
 - stop play (if the ball is in play)
 - take the correct disciplinary action (yellow card for a player, substitute or substituted player; red card for a team official)
 - have the person removed from the pitch if they are a substitute, substituted player or team official
 - restart play with a dropped ball or free kick (depending on the reason for stopping the game)
 - submit a report to the relevant authorities after the game

What happens if...

the person interferes with the game, the referee stops play (unless an advantage can be played) and awards a direct free kick (or penalty kick if the interference is in the offending person's penalty area)?

The offending person is:

- shown a yellow card for entering the pitch without permission
- shown a second yellow card and then a red card if they have committed another offence, e.g. a reckless tackle or arguing with the referee
- shown a red card if they have committed a sending-off offence (e.g. violent conduct, serious foul play, denying the other team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity)
- required to leave the pitch if they are a substitute or substituted player

>> *more*

>> continued

SUBSTITUTES OR TEAM OFFICIALS ON THE PITCH

a substitute, substituted player or player who has gone off the pitch with an injury or to change kit, etc. enters the pitch without permission?

If the person does not interfere with the game, the referee can allow it to continue. However, during the next stoppage in play, the offending person is shown a yellow card for entering the pitch without permission and required to leave the pitch if they are a substitute or substituted player.

a team official enters the pitch?

If the team official interferes with the game, the referee stops play (unless an advantage can be played) and awards a direct free kick (or penalty kick if the interference is in the penalty area of the offending team official) and the person is shown a red card for entering the pitch without permission and required to leave the pitch and the surrounding area for the rest of the game.

a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player (or player temporarily off the pitch) touches the ball as it is going out of play?

If there was no intention to interfere unfairly, an indirect free kick is awarded and no card is shown.

If the action was intended to be unfair, a direct free kick is awarded and:

- if a team official committed the offence, they are shown a red card
- if a substitute, substituted or sent-off player (or player temporarily off the pitch) committed the offence, they are shown a yellow card

SUBSTITUTIONS

What is a substitution in football?

A substitution takes place when a player on the pitch is replaced by a substitute. Substitutes, also known as 'subs', are extra players who may replace their team-mates during a game. The substitutes remain in the technical area unless they are warming up.

Competition rules:

- determine how many substitutes a team can:
 - > name on the team list
 - > use during a game
- may allow each team to use one additional substitute and substitution opportunity in extra time
- may allow each team to use one additional permanent concussion substitution to replace a player with concussion or suspected concussion

At lower levels of the game, some competitions allow rolling/return substitutions, which means a player who has been substituted can return to the game.

The names of the substitutes must be given to the referee before the game starts.

In senior football, each team is usually allowed to use up to five substitutes and usually has a maximum of three opportunities to make a substitution (excluding during half-time, the period between full-time and the start of extra time, and half-time in extra time).

In the interests of player welfare, some competitions also allow each team to make an additional permanent concussion substitution when a player has concussion or suspected concussion. Making a concussion substitution does not affect the team's number of 'normal substitutions' (or substitution opportunities) but the other team gets an extra 'normal substitution' (and substitution opportunity).

What should happen during a substitution in football?

- A substitution can only occur when the game is stopped and with the referee's permission
- Unless they are already off the pitch, the player being substituted must:
 - > leave the pitch within ten seconds of the substitution board being shown or, where there is no board, the referee's signal
 - > leave the pitch at the nearest point on the boundary line or quickly at the halfway line
- After the substitution, the substituted player must go straight to the bench/technical area or the dressing room and remain off the pitch
- If the player being substituted takes more than ten seconds to leave the pitch (and has not had permission from the referee to take longer because they are injured or for safety reasons):
 - > the player must still leave the pitch
 - > the substitute has to wait on the touchline for one minute (running clock) after play resumes and can only enter the pitch at a stoppage and when given the signal to enter by the referee
 - > the team cannot ask to cancel the substitution or use a different substitute
- The substitute must only enter the pitch:
 - > after receiving the referee's signal
 - > after the substituted player has left the pitch
 - > at the halfway line
- Once the substituted player has left the pitch and the substitute has entered the pitch, the substitution is completed and cannot be changed (except in the case of rolling/return substitutions)

more >>

>> continued

SUBSTITUTIONS

What happens if...

someone whose name was not given to the referee before the kick-off wants to play?

They cannot take part in the game.

the player being substituted will not leave the pitch?

The game carries on.

a player takes more than ten seconds to leave the pitch?

Unless the referee has allowed more time because the player is injured or, for safety reasons, the player must still leave the pitch, but the substitute cannot enter until the first stoppage after one minute's play (running clock).

a player leaves the pitch at the wrong place to waste time?

The player is shown a yellow card unless the substitute is prevented from entering the pitch for one minute.

the substitute enters the pitch before the player being substituted has left the pitch?

The substitute must go back and wait for the correct time to enter (no card is shown).

a substitution occurs without the referee's permission (except during half-time, the period between full-time and the start of extra time, or half-time in extra time)?

The player and substitute are both shown a yellow card.

a substitution is made during half-time, the period between full-time and the start of extra time, or half-time in extra time, but the referee is not informed?

The substitute may continue to play, no card is shown and the matter is reported to the appropriate authorities.

a team tries to use too many substitutes?

This must be prevented by the referee.

more >>

>> continued

SUBSTITUTIONS

the referee mistakenly allows too many substitutions to be made?

As soon as the referee becomes aware, the substitution(s) must be reversed. The matter must be reported to the appropriate authorities after the game.

a substitute or substituted player interferes with the game?

A direct free kick or penalty kick is awarded, and a red or yellow card is shown (see [red cards](#) and [yellow cards](#), respectively).

a team makes a concussion substitution?

The other team gets an extra substitution which can be made at any time and for any reason.

a team makes a concussion substitution and the substituted player then feels better and wants to return?

The player cannot return as it could be dangerous for them to do so, as concussion symptoms can take some time to appear.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

TECHNICAL AREA

What is the technical area in football?

The technical area, sometimes called a 'bench' or 'dugout', is an area outside the pitch that team officials, substitutes and substituted players occupy during a match, except in special circumstances (e.g. when the referee allows a physio or team doctor onto the pitch to provide medical treatment to a player or when substitutes are warming up). In many levels of football, these areas are not marked. Each team usually has its own separate technical area or 'bench'/'dugout'.

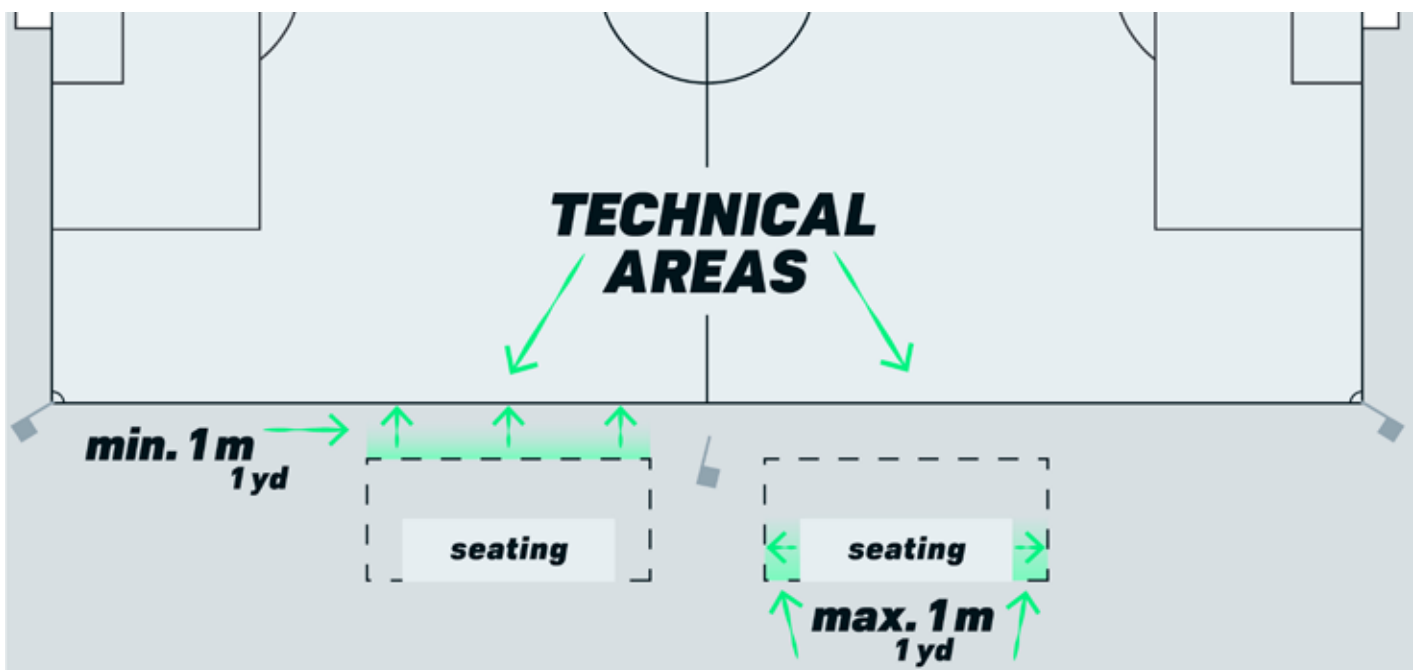
The technical area helps to reduce conflicts with match officials and the opposition.

What are the requirements for the technical area in football?

There are some specific requirements for the technical area:

- it must be at least 1 m (1 yd) from the touchline
- it should not extend more than 1 m (1 yd) on either side of any designated seating area
- competition rules will state how many people are allowed in the technical area
- only one person from each team is allowed to stand and coach at any one time

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).



TEMPORARY DISMISSALS (SIN BINS)

What are temporary dismissals (sin bins) in football?

Temporary dismissals or sin bins are a disciplinary option that may be used to penalise some or all yellow-card offences in youth, veterans, disability and grassroots competitions by dismissing the offender from the game for a short period of time. Competition rules will determine if there are sin bins for all yellow cards or only for specific yellow-card offences, e.g. dissent.

What happens when there is a temporary dismissal (sin bin) in football?

When a player commits a sin-bin offence, the referee shows a yellow card and points with both arms to the technical areas to indicate that the player must leave the pitch for a certain amount of time. The time is defined by the competition rules and typically ranges from five to ten minutes.

The player leaves and stays off the pitch (in the technical area or with the team officials) until the sin-bin period is completed and the referee signals for the player to return to the game. The signal can only be given when there is a stoppage in play.

The sin-bin period starts when the match restarts after the player has left the pitch. If there is a stoppage in play, the sin-bin period is extended by the time the play was stopped.

In competitions where sin bins are used for all yellow-card offences:

- A player who has been in the sin bin once and then commits another sin-bin offence:
 - > is sent to the sin bin again
 - > cannot return to the game
 - > can be substituted at the end of their second sin-bin period if the team has not used all its substitutes and/or all its substitution opportunities (if applicable)

In competitions where sin bins are only used for some yellow-card offences:

- A player who receives two yellow cards (regardless of whether they are sin-bin offences or not) is sent off and may not be replaced/substituted

What happens if...

a player commits an offence when in the sin bin (e.g. argues about a decision)?

The player is shown a red or yellow card (depending on the offence) and is not allowed to return to the game when the sin-bin period has ended.

a player is in the sin bin at the end of the first half?

The player spends the remaining time in the sin bin at the start of the second half.

a player is in the sin bin at the end of the game and extra time will be played?

The player spends the remaining time in the sin bin at the start of extra time.

a player is in the sin bin at the end of the game and there is a penalty shoot-out?

The player can take part in the penalty shoot-out.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

THROW-IN

What is a throw-in in football?

A throw-in is the restart of play after the whole of the ball has gone out over the touchline, on the ground or in the air. A throw-in is awarded to the opponents of the last player to touch the ball before it went out of play or to the opponents when the referee penalises a team for not taking a throw-in by the end of a five-second countdown.

Who can take a throw-in in football?

Any player, including a goalkeeper, can take a throw-in.

A substitute who is replacing another player but has not yet entered the pitch or a player who had left the pitch (due to an injury or to change their shirt, etc.) can take a throw-in as long as at least part of one of their feet touches the touchline before they take it, as this means they have satisfied the Law requirement for entering the pitch.

How is a throw-in taken in football?

The thrower must:

- take the throw-in from the point on the touchline where the ball went out of play
- stand and face the pitch
- have part of each foot on or behind the touchline
- throw the ball with both hands
- throw the ball from behind and over the top of their head
- not touch the ball again until another player has touched it

The other team's players must be at least 2 m (2 yds) away from the point on the touchline where the throw-in is to be taken. If a team is taking too long with a throw-in, the referee will count down five seconds using a raised hand. If the throw-in has not been taken by the end of the countdown, it is awarded to the other team.

The ball is in play when it enters the pitch.

What happens if...

the ball does not go onto the pitch?

The same team takes the throw-in again (it does not have to be taken by the same player).

the throw-in is taken from the wrong place?

The other team takes the throw-in, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

>> *more*

>> continued

THROW-IN

the thrower lifts one or both feet off the ground?

The other team takes the throw-in, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

the thrower has part of one foot or both feet on the pitch?

No offence has been committed, as long as a part of each foot is on or behind the touchline.

the thrower does not use two hands to take the throw-in?

The other team takes the throw-in, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

the thrower does not throw the ball over their head?

The other team takes the throw-in, unless the referee plays the advantage (this is only possible if the ball came into play).

the thrower touches the ball again before another player has touched it?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team. However, if the second touch is a handball, a direct free kick is awarded; if the handball offence is committed inside the thrower's penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded, unless the thrower was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

A yellow card is shown to the offending player if the second touch stopped a promising attack.

A red card is shown to the offending player if the second touch denied the opponents a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

an opponent is not 2 m (2 yds) from the thrower when the throw-in is taken?

If this interferes with the throw-in but does not prevent it being taken, an indirect free kick is awarded. If the throw-in is prevented, it must be retaken. In both cases, a yellow card is shown to the offending player.

an opponent unfairly distracts the thrower?

If this interferes with the throw-in but does not prevent it being taken, an indirect free kick is awarded. If the throw-in is prevented, it must be retaken. In both cases, a yellow card is shown to the offending player.

the ball is thrown straight into the other team's goal?

A goal kick is awarded to the other team.

>> more

>> continued

THROW-IN

a team is taking too long with a throw-in?

The referee will signal for the throw-in to be taken and count down five seconds using a raised hand. If the throw-in has not been taken by the end of the countdown, the throw-in is awarded to the other team. The original thrower is not shown a yellow card unless they then excessively delay the taking of the throw-in by the other team.

the ball is thrown straight into the thrower's goal?

A corner kick is awarded to the other team.

the wrong team takes the throw-in?

The throw-in must be retaken by the correct team.

a player taking a throw-in throws the ball against an opponent to regain possession of the ball but not in a reckless manner or with excessive force?

Play continues as there is no offence.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE (VAR) SYSTEM

What is the video assistant referee (VAR) system in football?

The video assistant referee (VAR) system is an option that involves a qualified video assistant referee helped by one or more qualified assistant video assistant referees (AVARs) and one or more replay operators. The VAR and AVAR(s) watch replays of major incidents to check if anything serious has been missed or the referee has made a 'clear and obvious error' in relation to certain categories of incidents.

How does the video assistant referee (VAR) system work in football?

The VAR can only check incidents relating to:

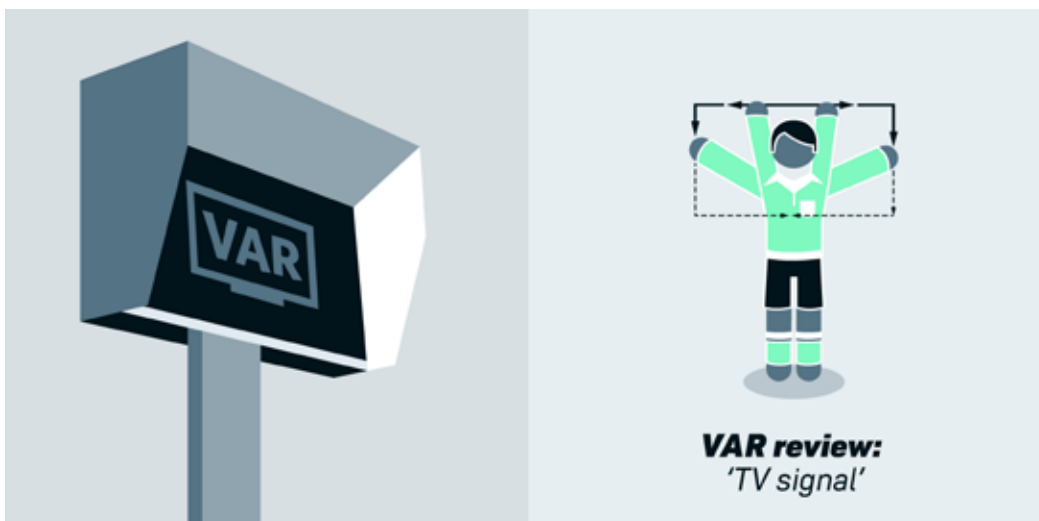
- goal/no goal
- penalty/no penalty
- red cards (including clearly incorrect second yellow cards)
- mistaken identity (when the wrong player is shown a red or yellow card)

In addition, competitions can decide whether to allow the VAR to review wrongly awarded corner kicks, but only if the decision can be changed immediately.

In principle, the original decision stands unless it is clearly wrong. If the VAR believes a 'clear and obvious error' has been made or something serious has been missed, the referee is informed through the communication headset and then makes a 'TV signal' to indicate that an incident is being reviewed.

If the incident requires a judgement to be made (e.g. whether a foul is serious enough for a red card to be shown), the referee will go to the referee review area next to the pitch to look at the video replays on a monitor; this is an 'on-field review' (OFR). After watching the replays, which will often show the incident at different speeds and from various angles, the referee will either confirm or change the original decision.

If the incident is factual (e.g. offside position or whether a foul occurred inside or outside the penalty area), the referee can correct an error without looking at the replays, based on information from the VAR; this is a 'VAR-only review' (VARO).



In some competitions, the referee will publicly announce and explain the final decision after a VAR 'review' or lengthy VAR 'check'.

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

WINNING TEAM

Which team wins a football match?

The team that scores more goals than the other team wins the match.

When no goals are scored or both teams score the same number of goals, the match is a draw.

Competition rules will determine how many points are awarded for a win and for a draw.

If a match (including a two-legged match) is drawn and a winner is needed, the competition rules will state that the winning team is decided by using one or a combination of:

- the away-goals rule (goals scored away from home count double)
- extra time (two equal halves not exceeding 15 minutes each)
- penalties (penalty shoot-out)

For more detailed information on this topic in the Laws of the Game, click [here](#).

YELLOW CARDS

What is a yellow card in football?

A yellow card is a disciplinary measure used by the referee. It signals that a player has been cautioned (booked) for an offence.

Yellow cards can be shown to players, substitutes, substituted players, coaches and other team officials.

A player who is shown two yellow cards in a game is shown a red card and sent off.

When can yellow cards be shown in football?

A person can be shown a yellow card from the time the referee goes onto the pitch for the start of the match until the referee leaves the pitch after the end of the game, including during half-time, the break between full-time and extra time, extra time, half-time of extra time and penalties.

If a player commits a yellow-card offence between the time the referee goes onto the pitch for the pre-match inspection and enters the pitch to start the game, no yellow card is shown but the incident is reported to the relevant disciplinary authorities after the game. This means that if the player is shown a yellow card during the game, they are not sent off for two yellow cards in the same game.

In some competitions, a yellow card may result in the player being sent off for a short period of time (temporary dismissal or sin bin) before being allowed to return to play.

Yellow cards must be shown during a stoppage in the game and not while the ball is in play.

What are yellow-card offences in football?

There are different reasons for the referee to show a yellow card to a player, substitute or substituted player and many of them are officially categorised as 'unsporting behaviour'.

The most common yellow-card offences are where a player:

- commits a reckless challenge or foul
- wastes time
- stops or interferes with a promising attack, usually by committing a foul or handball (there is no card issued if a penalty kick is awarded for a non-deliberate handball offence or for a foul that was an attempt to play or challenge for the ball)
- denies the other team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick for a foul that was an attempt to play or challenge for the ball
- argues with the referee or another match official (verbally or by making gestures)
- fails to respect the required distance from a free kick, corner kick, dropped ball or throw-in
- continually fouls (no specific number of fouls is required)
- simulates or dives to get a penalty or free kick, or exaggerates to get another player a red or yellow card
- excessively celebrates a goal, e.g. by taking off their shirt, jumping onto a fence, going into the crowd, mocking opponents, wearing a mask or covering their face with their shirt

Other yellow-card offences include:

- showing a lack of respect for the game
- trying to score a goal with the hand/arm (even if unsuccessful)
- entering, re-entering or leaving the pitch without the referee's permission
- changing places with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission
- making illegal marks on the pitch

>> *more*

>> *continued*

YELLOW CARDS

- playing the ball after being given permission by the referee to leave the pitch
- using a trick to get around the backpass rule
- verbally distracting an opponent

A yellow card is shown to a team official who:

- continually leaves their technical area
- delays the restart of play by their team
- enters the other team's technical area (without any major confrontation)
- argues with the referee or another match official (without leaving the technical area)
- continually signals for someone to be shown a red or yellow card
- excessively shows the 'TV signal' for a VAR review
- acts in a confrontational manner
- continually behaves unacceptably
- shows a lack of respect for the game

If someone in the technical area commits a yellow-card offence and cannot be identified, the senior coach present in the technical area is shown the yellow card (as the person responsible for the people in the technical area).

If the referee plays advantage following a yellow-card offence, the card must be shown when the game next stops. However, if the offence was stopping or interfering with a promising attack, no card is shown, as the advantage allowed the promising attack to continue.

Details about all yellow cards must be reported after the game to the relevant disciplinary authorities.

A dark blue background featuring a faint, stylized outline of a football (soccer ball) with its characteristic hexagonal and pentagonal panels. The lines are thin and light blue, creating a subtle watermark effect.

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