



17 Laws of the Game – An Unofficial Overview

There are seventeen rules or "Laws" in soccer. Most of the rules get modified for youth soccer but can vary from league to league. Here is an unofficial quick reference of the laws. You will need to contact your league administrator for a "list of rules and modifications" for your area. To see the official FIFA LAWS [click here](#).

Law 1 - Field Dimensions: Modified for youth to promote lots of touches. Fields can be 20' wide X 30' long for micro soccer and up to 70' wide X 110' long for 11v11 games.

Law 2 - Balls size: Ball sizes for youth play grow as the age group increases. A #3 ball is used for players the youngest players usually up to around U9. A #4 usually for players U10 to U12. U13 and up will tend to use the full sized #5. Ball sizes for certain age groups may be modified by local leagues.

Law 3 - Number of players: From 3 players for the youngest leagues to 11-a-side for the oldest. Again number of players for certain age groups may be modified by local leagues.

Law 4 - Player's equipment: Shin guards with socks that completely cover Shin guards. No jewelry or tape covering jewelry and no baseball cleats because baseball cleats have a front (tip toe) cleat that sticks out. Soccer "boots" have no such tip toe cleat.

Law 5 – Referees (Referee or Center ref): The referee has total control of the game and, unlike other sports the soccer referee has the latitude to make calls or not to make calls. The referee's main concern is the safety of the players and flow of the game. The ref enforces all the rules of the game but may elect NOT to stop play due to valid rules violations if no advantage is gained by a team/player.

Law 6 - Assistant referee (AR): In 11v11 games there are two assistants running the sidelines helping the referee control the game.

Law 7 - Duration of the game: The official time is two 45-minute halves. With youth leagues it can range from two 20 min. halves up to 45. Some leagues have 4 12-minute quarters which is the time recommended for micro soccer.

Law 8 - Start of play: The kick off is taken at the center spot and is determined by a coin toss. The ball has to move forward to start the half. Each player must be in his or her half of the field and at least ten yard away from the ball. If a referee has to do a drop ball, the play resumes when the ball hits the ground.



Law 9 - Ball in and out of play: The ball is out of play when it COMPLETELY goes over the goal line or touch-line (i.e. sidelines). It doesn't matter whether it's in the air or on the ground.

Law 10 - Method of scoring: The ball must COMPLETELY go across the line into the goal.

Law 11 - Off sides: One of the most complicated laws of the game. Most leagues don't apply off sides till they start playing 11 V 11. The basic concept is that a player must have at least one defender (not including the goalkeeper) between him and the goal WHEN the ball is played to him. Also to be offside the player must be in the opponent's side and looking to gain an advantage. If a player is in an offside position and the ball is NOT played to them or no advantage is gained the offside infraction is NOT called (See Law 5 above)

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct: Soccer is a contact sport and there will and can be contact especially for winning 50/50 balls, fighting for balls in the air, tackling or dislodging a ball from an opponent, etc. At the youth level most fouls are due to pushing, holding or tripping and body blocking/charging in an attempt to try to get a ball that is clearly possessed by an opponent or unfairly contacting an opponent to prohibit them from gaining possession (i.e. again gaining unfair advantage). However, if no advantage is gained or dangerous action occurs (i.e. cleats in the air, knocking a player out of the way to get to a ball, charging a player to dislodge a ball) by the contact no foul is called. These result in a free kick.

Another foul that occurs often is a handball. A ball may not be intentionally influenced or redirected using any part of the arm/hand. If so a foul is called and possession changes to the other team. A ball MAY hit an arm/hand innocently and play continue if the player does not try to redirect/influence the ball. The key to watch for with a "handball violation" is did the player move his/her hand/arm to the ball to influence it (hand to ball – foul called) or did the ball innocently touch his/her arm/hand (ball to hand – no foul).

Law 13: Free kicks - There are two types. A direct and indirect. At the youth level most free kicks are classified as indirect. This means a goal may not be scored until the ball has been played or touched by a second player of either team. Direct means a goal may be scored directly from the free kick.

Law 14: Penalty kick - If a player commits a foul in their own penalty area (18-box) a Penalty kick will be awarded. The kick is taken twelve yards out from the goal with the shooting player being one-on-one with the goalie. The ball is "live" after the shot.



Law 15: Throw in – This is a form of game restart when the ball crosses over the touchline (i.e. sideline). Both of the throwers feet have to be on the ground, must have two hands on the ball, and the throw must come from behind the players head. The penalty for a bad throw in is that the opposing team gets the ball. Younger leagues often do not enforce this rule or give the player another chance to make a legal throw in.

Law 16: Goal Kick – This a form of game restart when the ball is played over the goal line (i.e. end line) by the attacking team. The ball is positioned on the ground anywhere within the 6 yd box and a free kick is taken. The ball may be kicked by any player (not necessarily the goalie). The kicker, kicking team or opponents may not touch the ball again until it has left the penalty area (18 yd box).

Law 17: Corner Kick - A corner kick is awarded when the defending team kicks the ball over their own goal line. This is essentially a direct free kick from the corner of the field. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

Please consult the official FIFA LAWS ([click here](#)) or take an entry level referee class. Youth league are ALWAYS looking for referees.