

Soccer Rules

The following are general summaries of the 17, FIFA-published Laws of the Game. For official details and further information, including Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees, please visit www.fifa.com.

Law 1 - The Field of Play

The playing field can be natural or artificial as long as it is green and generally FIFA-approved for competition matches. The field must be rectangular, with the touchline longer than the goal line, and with all other markings and goal areas placed according to FIFA standards.

Law 2 - The Ball

FIFA Law states that the ball must be spherical, made of either leather or other appropriate material, and must be 68-70 cm (27-28 inches) around and must weigh between 14-16 ounces. Should the ball become defective during the game, the ball is replaced and the game either continues or is restarted, depending on when and where the ball became defective.

Law 3 - The Number of Players

A game consists of two teams of 7-11 players per team, including goalkeepers. The number of allowable substitutes per match varies depending on the type of match played. Please check official FIFA rulings for the detailed substitution procedure, including replacement of goalkeepers, substitute infringements, and send-offs of players and substitutes.

Law 4 - The Players' Equipment

Equipment must be safe, and basic clothing should include a jersey, shorts, socks, shin guards and shoes. Teams, referees, and goalkeepers must wear colors that distinguish them from one another. In cases of infringement, and for other decisions regarding players' equipment, see FIFA rulings at www.fifa.com.

Law 5 - The Referee

The referee enforces the laws of the game, and his or her decisions are authoritative and final. Duties include working with other game officials to control the match, ensuring that equipment meets match requirements, stopping and restarting play at his or her discretion, protecting the safety of players, and taking disciplinary action against offending players and officials. The referee keeps reports of match penalties and results.

Law 6 - The Assistant Referees

A game generally includes two assistants whose job is to help the referee control the match. The assistant signals when a player out of the referee's field of vision fouls or engages in misconduct, or when the ball leaves the field. The assistant is overseen by the referee, who may relieve any assistant who interferes with his or her duties, or engages in misconduct.

Law 7 - The Duration of the Match

A match generally consists of two, 45-minute segments of time unless a different duration is agreed upon by both teams prior to the match. A match may include a half-time interval not more than 15 minutes long. Allowance for lost game time due to stops and restarts is made at the Referee's discretion. Reasons for lost game time may include substitutions, injuries, penalties, and abandoned matches.

Law 8 - The Start and Restart of Play

Games are started and restarted with a kick-off. A coin toss determines which team starts play. The starting team chooses which goal to attack in the first half of the game with the other team kicking off, and the reverse happens at the start of the second half. Kick-offs generally happen at the start of a match, or when extra time is begun, or after a goal is scored. When a game is restarted, players must be positioned in their team's half of the field, the ball is placed at the center mark, with opponents of the kick-off player being at least 10 yards from the ball until the ball is in play. When the referee gives the signal, the ball is kicked and the kicker may not touch the ball until it is contacted by another player. After a goal is scored, the kick-off is given to the other team. For more information, see Laws of the Game, at www.fifa.com.

Law 9 - The Ball In and Out of Play

According to FIFA, the ball is considered In Play at all times during the game, except when it is technically Out of Play. In Play includes when the ball bounces off the goalpost, crossbar or corner flag post, or rebounds off referees while on the playing field. The ball is considered Out of Play when it has completely crossed the goal line or touch line while either on the ground or in the air, or when the referee stops the game.

Law 10 - The Method of Scoring

Goals are scored by a team when the team's ball completely crosses the goal line between the goalposts and beneath the crossbar. The team that scores the most goals during a game is the winner. In the case of a tie, or if no goals are scored, the match is drawn. For procedure details see FIFA's Laws of the Game at www.fifa.com.

Law 11 - Offside

According to FIFA, a player is considered to be in an offside position when he is in his opponent's half of the field, and is closer to the opponent's goal than the ball and the second-to-the-last opponent. This position should not be confused with an offside offense, which is committed if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his teammates, a player is involved in active play by attempting to interfere with a play, or is trying to gain an advantage by being in that position. However the player may receive the ball directly from a goal kick, a throw-in, or a corner kick, without being penalized.

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

Three kinds of kicks are awarded to a team whose opponent committed a foul or act of misconduct: a Direct Free Kick, a Penalty Kick, and an Indirect Free Kick.

A Direct Free Kick is awarded to a team whose opponent committed a careless, reckless, or excessively forceful offense by deliberately kicking, tripping, jumping at, charging, striking, pushing, or unlawfully tackling their opponent. Offenses punishable by a Direct Free Kick also

include holding, or spitting at an opponent, and deliberately handling the ball (unless by the goalie within his own penalty area). A Direct Free Kick is taken from where the offense took place.

A Penalty Kick is given to the team whose opponent committed one of the above offenses within his own penalty area while the ball is in play, regardless of the ball's position.

An Indirect Free Kick is awarded the team whose opposing goalkeeper committed an offense within his penalty area. Offenses include: controlling the ball with his hands for longer than six seconds, touching the ball after releasing it but before another player has touched it, touching the ball with his hands after it was kicked to him by a teammate, and touching the ball with his hands after receiving a direct throw-in from a teammate. Indirect Free Kicks are also awarded to opponents of players who are unsafe, who impede an opponent's progress, who try to prevent the goalie from releasing the ball from his hands, or players who commit another offense that warrants a caution.

Law 13 - Free Kicks

Two kinds of Free Kicks can be awarded in the case of a penalty: Direct and Indirect. The object of a Direct Free Kick is to kick the ball directly into the opponent's goal, in which case a goal is scored. However, if a ball enters directly into a team's own goal, the team's opponent is awarded a Corner Kick.

With an Indirect Free Kick, the ball must touch another player before entering the goal in order to score a goal. If kicked directly into the opponent's goal, a goal kick is given. If the player kicks the ball directly into his team's own goal, the opponent is awarded a Corner Kick.

Law 14 - The Penalty Kick

Again, a Penalty Kick is given to a team whose opponent committed an offense within his own penalty area while the ball is in play. Things to remember: a goal can be scored from a direct Penalty Kick, and Penalty Kicks are allowed additional time at the end of each half or at the end of added time periods.

Law 15 - The Throw-In

A method of restarting play, a Throw-In is awarded to the opponent of a player who last touched the ball before it completely crossed the touch line, on the ground or in the air, however a goal cannot be scored directly from this restart. The ball is thrown back in from the point at which it left the field of play.

Law 16 - The Goal Kick

A Goal Kick is another way to restart play. It is given to an opponent of the attacker who last touched the ball before it completely crossed the goal line, on the ground or in the air, without scoring a goal. It is taken from anywhere within the goal area.

Law 17 - The Corner Kick

This restart method is awarded to the opponent of the defending team who last touched the ball before it completely crossed the goal line, on the ground or in the air, without scoring a goal. It is taken from inside the corner arc closest to where the ball crossed the line.

Soccer Field Markings

