

AMENITY ATHLETICS



10 SIMPLE SOCCER RULES FOR PARENTS

RULE 1 – NO HANDS, PLEASE

I bet you knew that one. Most people who know nothing about soccer still know that you aren't supposed to use your hands unless you're a goalie. But what is the rule for a "hand ball?"

There is no such rule. O.K., let's clarify this. First, the rule includes handling the ball with any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder. Did you notice I said **"handling"** the ball? The rule states a player cannot handle the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player's hand or arm is not a hand ball. This means that the referee must use his or her own judgment to some extent in determining whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or a purposeful attempt to gain advantage. Put in another way, the referee must determine if the play was

Ball to Hand (Legal)
Or
Hand to Ball (Illegal)

Believe it or not, there is also a situation where the goalie cannot use his/her hands. This is sometimes called the pass-back rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a pass that came directly from one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper must use his feet.

RULE 2 – EQUIPMENT

The basic equipment for soccer required by the FIFA Laws of the Game are:

- A jersey or shirt
- Shorts
- Stockings
- Shinguards

- Footwear

According to FIFA, shinguards should be “covered entirely by the stockings, made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic, or similar substance), and provide a reasonable degree of protection.” Most soccer leagues will not allow a person to play or practice without shinguards. Purchasing good shinguards should be a top priority for every parent.

There are no requirements by FIFA that your child have shoes with cleats. Technically, regular tennis shoes are fine – not recommended, but legal. If your child does wear cleats, please make sure there is not a “toe cleat” (as on baseball or football) cleats.

No necklaces, earrings, nose rings, belly rings, bracelets, or tiaras. Soft “scrunchies” are generally allowed as are soft head stockings. If a child just had their ears pierced, the studs should be covered with tape or removed. As one fellow commented, “is the hole going to grow back in an hour?”

RULE 3 – START AND RESTART

A kick-off is the way a soccer game is started or restarted:

- At the start of a game
- After a goal has been scored
- At the start of the second half (or each quarter)
- At the start of each extra period of time, if used

The ball is placed in the center of the field. All players must be in their own half of the field and the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 10 yards from the ball. The distance is indicated by the center circle on the field and will vary with some age. Normally the referee will blow his/her whistle to indicate they are ready for the kickoff. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward. Note that the two-touch rule applies here (see Rule 8).

RULE 4 – THROW-INS

A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field of play. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head. To clarify, both feet must be on the ground **when the ball is thrown**. The player can hop, run, or do cartwheels up to the point where the ball is released but not *when* the ball is released. Dragging the toes of one foot is considered legal. For teaching purposes it is common to allow players under the age of 8 to take more than 1 attempt.

RULE 5 – CORNER KICKS & GOAL KICKS

A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across the goal line – you know, either end of the field with a goal. 😊

If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the “goalie box:” as it is affectionately called. It can be taken by any player, not just the goalkeeper. FIFA soccer rules state that the ball is not “in play” until it leaves the penalty area, the large box outside of the “goalie box” (see the diagram at the end). If either team touches the ball before it leaves the penalty area or if the ball is not kicked well enough to leave the penalty area, the kick must be retaken.

If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick. The corner kick is taken from – yes, you guessed it – the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.

RULE 6 – DIRECT AND INDIRECT FREE KICKS

Direct and indirect kicks are two primary ways that play is restarted after the referee stops play for an infraction. For both of these the ball must be stationary before it is kicked and the opposing players should be a minimum of 10 yards away.

The difference between a direct kick and an indirect kick is this: On a direct kick you can score by kicking the ball *directly* into the goal. On an indirect kick you cannot score. An indirect kick must be touched by another player before it can go into the goal – that is the kicker and a second person. There are many rules around what causes a direct or indirect kick. In general, a direct kick comes from a contact foul or hand ball. Everything else is indirect.

RULE 7 – PENALTY KICK

A penalty kick results from a contact foul or a hand ball by the defending team within the penalty area – the large box on either end of the field. So it’s a type of direct kick also.

The ball is placed on the penalty spot or mark, 12 yards in front of the center of the goal. All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked.

If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off the keeper and stays on the field, the ball is “live” and anyone can play it. If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off the goal and stays on the field, the ball is “live” and anyone can play it **with the exception of the person who just kicked the ball**. If the ball rebounds off of the goal and back into play, the person who kicked the ball cannot play it until the ball is touched by another player.

RULE 8 – TWO-TOUCH RULE

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will see this frequently on kick-offs, corner kicks, or direct and indirect kicks. If a kid barely hits the ball and decides to take another swipe at it, that is a two-touch violation. This also applies to throw-ins. A kid cannot throw the ball in and then kick it. Nope. No way. No can do. The only exception to this rule is on a drop ball restart.

RULE 9 – FOULS AND PUNISHMENT

The common rule of thumb on fouls is “if it looks like a foul, it probably is.” A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent. So what’s the problem?

Soccer can be a physical, contact sport when two opposing players both want the soccer ball and no parent or grandparent likes it when little Susie loses the ball and ends up on the ground! “**Foul!**” cries the parent. “**Little Susie was pushed!**”

What you need to know as a parent is that bumping or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is *not a foul* until the hands or elbows come up. This is a bit of a judgment call and not all referees will call it the same way. Some soccer rules are actually not black-and-white.

Remember though, the referee is ALWAYS right. 😊

The normal consequence of a foul is a direct kick for the opposing team. However, depending upon the situation the referee may choose to not call a foul if it is to the fouled player’s advantage. If player A fouls Player B who is on a breakaway, it is obviously to Player B’s advantage to continue with the breakaway instead of stopping the play for a foul.

RULE 10 – OFFSIDE

I decided to leave the best for last. This is without a doubt the least understood rule by parents and coaches alike. The first thing you need to know is that you cannot be offside on a corner kick, goal kick, or throw-in. Don’t ask me why. Just accept it and go on. The explanation is too long.

Also, ***it is not an offense for a player to be in an offside position.*** The player must be involved in active play as determined by the referee to be called offside. As quoted from the FIFA soccer rules: **A player is in an offside position if:** *he is nearer to his opponents’ goal line than both the ball and the second to last opponent.*

Clear yet? O.K., just in case your not; an offensive or attacking player can’t be ahead of the ball and involved in the play unless there is a defender between him and the goalkeeper. Or, you can’t hang out on the other team’s goal waiting for the ball. A few buts!

You can’t be offside if you are standing in your half of the field. Also, the offside rule applies when the ball is kicked, not when the player receives the ball. To be honest with you, this rule can be hard to understand. Don’t get too hung up on it. Trust the referees! 😊