

Troy Youth Soccer Association Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches and Referees



TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

General note

The “Laws of the Game,” authorized by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), published by the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), and printed by the United States Soccer Federation (USSF).

Changes to these rules as adopted by TYSA are as follows and are in effect for the spring season starting February 2026:

Administrative Rules for the Club are as follows:

- Season - The length, start, and termination shall be determined on a per season basis and shall be conveyed to the coaches in their schedules and/or phone call.
- Eligibility – All players must be registered, and fees must be paid in good standing prior to participation in practices and games.
- All games and practices shall be on TYSA insured fields only. Coaches will be subject to board discipline or removal from the TYSA league if any games/practices played on non-TYSA fields not approved or covered by TYSA or TYSA insurance.
- Disciplinary Action - Any player or coach ejected from a league match (given a red card) will receive a minimum of a one game suspension starting with the next league match. Any player or coach who accumulates three cautions during a season will automatically be suspended from the next match, and any further cautions will result in an additional one-match suspension for each subsequent caution. The following are prohibited:
 - Foul language, acts of aggression toward players, coaches, referees, board members, league coordinators, field officers or spectators will result in a determination by the referee of either a caution or send off for players, and a caution or ejection for any others involved.
 - Spitting at another player before, during the game or at post-game line-up is an automatic suspension from the next league match.
 - Coaches are prohibited from smoking, vaping or chewing tobacco in their respective technical areas (bench area) during any league match.
 - Consumption of alcohol by anyone at any league match is prohibited.
 - Arguing with, or yelling at, a referee at any point before, during or after a game will result in the parent/spectator being ejected from the park. Coaches, please police your own sidelines!

The TYSA Board retains the authority to invoke more severe punishment for any form of misconduct.

- Concerns – Any concerns, questions, or problems should be addressed in the following order.
 - Coach
 - Referee Coordinator
 - Board of Director

This procedure must be followed for the issue to be considered for board disposition.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

- Forfeits and cancellations - Cancellations may be considered for rescheduling if verbal request of cancellation is made within 5 working days prior to scheduled game to the division coordinator. If a team contacts the opposing coach only, and neither team shows up for a match, it will be considered a double forfeit and will not be rescheduled. In order for a team to be awarded a win in this situation, at least the minimum number of players required to play the match and 1 coach must be present on the appointed field at game time.
 - Games and practices may be cancelled at the discretion of the league for weather conditions. As Coach you can cancel practices at your discretion. If the board decides to cancel practices or games, all coaches will be contacted by 4:00 pm for practices and as soon as possible on game days. Cancelled games due to weather conditions will likely be re-scheduled on the following Saturday from the day it was originally scheduled, however it may not be at the same time as originally scheduled.

- Suspension of Games -
 - In the event a game is terminated after the end of the first half, the game is considered completed and the score will stand.
 - If the game is suspended due to adverse weather, wet/unsafe playing conditions, extreme temperatures, imminent threat of lightning (within ten miles of location), the TYSA Board has the right to continue or terminate the match after a 30-minute waiting period.
 - If the game is suspended due to violation of FIFA / TYSA rules, and is protested, the coach must protest in writing to the Ref Coordinator and must follow the order as listed previously under concerns for the protest to be considered for board disposition.
 - If games are to be played in “quarters” due to heat-related conditions, we shall no longer use a continuous clock.

Simplified Interpretation of the Laws of the Game

Law 1 -- The Field of Play

The requirements for a soccer field are as follows:

a) The field must be rectangular, laid out longer between the goal lines defining its ends than between the touchlines defining its sides. Official-sized match fields must be between 100 x 50 yards (minimum) and 130 x 100 (maximum). For younger players or smaller-sided games, smaller fields (e.g. 80 x 50 or less) are often specified.

b) An upright rectangular-mouthed goal must be centered on each of the two goal lines. The upright front posts should rest on the goal line; their back edges aligned with the back edges of the goal. Official-sized goals are 8 feet high (to bottom of the crossbar) and 8yards (24 feet) wide between the inside edges of the front posts. Smaller, similarly proportioned goals are often used for younger players on smaller fields.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

c) The field and goals must be in safe condition. This decision is the referees to judge whether to allow the match to proceed. The field must be free of dangerous holes, obstructions, and hazards (ie. a protruding sprinkler head) or too much standing water, ice, or deep mud for a safely playable game. The goals must be anchored and in safe good repair, including the crossbar.

d) The field's lines and markings enable the referees and players to readily judge when a ball is in or out of play, whether a goal has scored, whether a foul occurred in or out of the penalty area, or whether a player is in the correct position at a restart of play. A properly marked soccer field includes the following:

- goal lines (end) and touch lines (side) bounding the field.
- corner flags at least 5 ft high (safety requirement) at each intersection of goal & touch lines, with a 1-yard corner arc inside each corner.
- goal area, the smaller rectangular box centered in front of the goal, extending 6 yards out from the goal line and 6 yards to either side of the inside of each goalpost.
- penalty area, the larger rectangular box centered in front of the goal, extending 18 yards out from the goal line and 18 yards to either side of the inside of each goalpost.
- center spot at the center of field, where kickoffs are taken, surrounded by a 10-yard radius center circle, and at each end a penalty spot centered 12 yards from the goal, surrounded by a 10-yard partial penalty arc outside the penalty area.
- halfway line across the center of the field dividing it in half.

e) Lines are part of the areas they bound, which are 3-dimensional extending upward indefinitely. This means, for example, that a ball is in bounds if any part of it is within the outside boundary of the line, whether touching the line or above it in the air. Not only are the lines part of the field, but so are the referee, assistant referee, goal and corner flags. If the ball hits any of these and stays in play, the game is not stopped.

f) A goal net is essential to determine when a goal is scored, especially if there is only one referee. The net should be without holes, tears, etc., and should be fastened securely to both the ground and the goal. (However, the laws of the game do not require a net.)

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 - The goals shall be 6 feet wide and 4 feet in height. The sidelines, end lines, center line, center circle (3 yard radius) and the goal area shall be the only field markings identified for this age group.

U6 - The goals shall be 10 feet wide and 7 feet in height. A center circle shall be identified on the field with a 3-yard radius center circle. There shall be a penalty "spot" marked outside of the penalty area to indicate where a direct kick is taken from for the attacking team when a foul occurs by the opposing team inside the box, such as a hand ball, tripping, etc.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

U8 - The goals shall be 12 feet wide and 6.5 feet in height. The penalty spot shall be 6 yds from the goal line with an arc at the top of the penalty box with a 5-yard radius. The center circle shall have a 5 yard radius center circle.

U10B - The penalty spot shall be 8 yards from the goal line with an arc at the top of the penalty box with a 7-yard radius. The U10 goals shall be 21 feet wide and 7.5 feet in height. The center circle shall have a 7-yard radius.

U10G - The penalty spot shall be 8 yards from the goal line with an arc at the top of the penalty box with a 7-yard radius. The U10 goals shall be 18.5 feet wide and 6.5 feet in height. The center circle shall have a 7-yard radius.

U12 - The penalty spot shall be 10 yards from the goal line with an arc at the top of the penalty box with an 8-yard radius. The center circle shall have an 8-yard radius. The U12 goals shall be 24 feet wide and 8 feet in height.

U14,16 - The penalty spot shall be 12 yards from the goal line with an arc at the top of the penalty box with a 10-yard radius. The center circle shall have a 10-yard radius. U14/16 goals shall be 24 feet wide and 8 feet in height.

ALL - The coaches and players shall be located on the opposite side of the field as the spectators. The spectators should remain on their side of the field as well as the coaches on their side of the field. No spectators or coaches are allowed behind the goals. The coaches shall not be allowed to roam the entire sideline. They are to remain on their half of the field with the centerline being the dividing line.

Law 2 -- The Ball

The standard ball for adults and players older than about 12 is the “size 5.” Younger divisions often use sizes 4 (approx. ages 8-11) or 3. The ball should be a perfect sphere with no irregularities (no wobble when spinning) and should be relatively firm -- it should yield only about 1/4” to 1/2” even when pressed pretty hard with the thumb -- unfortunately, it is very common for the ball to be softer than that in youth games.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – Shall use a size 3 ball.

U6 – Shall use a size 3 ball.

U8 – Shall use a size 3 ball.

U10 – Shall use a size 4 ball.

U12 – Shall use a size 4 ball.

U14 – Shall use a size 5 ball.

Law 3 -- Number of Players and Substitutes

A regular soccer team has eleven players on the field plus a few substitutes (how many varies from one league to another). One of the players must be designated the goalkeeper, who may play the ball with their

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

hands within their own penalty area. A game may be started or continued with fewer than eleven, although if either team falls below seven players the game ends. Teams lose players when one is sent off [shown a red card] -- he may not be replaced, and the team plays short.

Ask the referee when substitutions may be made: your team's throw-ins, all goal kicks, etc. However, it is done, substitutions can only be made when play is stopped, and with the permission of the referee. You must also wait for a stoppage and inform the referee before changing the designated goalkeeper.

The player(s) going in, needs to be at the halfway line, ready to enter, and (after receiving permission from the referee) should call to the player(s) they are replacing to leave; they should wait until the first player has left before entering the field.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – The U4 games shall be played in a 4 v 4 game with a minimum of 3 players. In the interest of fair play, coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. There shall be no goalies. Either team may substitute on any throw-in, corner kick, goal kick, or any other stoppage in play (i.e. Injury).

U6 – The U6 games shall be played in a 8 v 8 game including a goalie with a minimum of 5. In the interest of fair play coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. You are able to reduce team size down to 7 v 7 if both coaches agree. There shall be no “camping out” in front of the goal. Camping out is defined as standing in front of the goal and remaining there while the ball is on the other half of the field. If a player is found guilty of this infraction the referee shall instruct the player to move out of the goal area. The coach should instruct his players to move out and provide chase after the ball. Either team may substitute on any throw-in, corner kick, goal kick, or any other stoppage in play (i.e. Injury).

U8 – The U8 games shall be played in an 9 v 9 game including a goalie with a minimum of 6 players In the interest of fair play coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short, to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. You are able to reduce team size down to 8 v 8 if both coaches agree. Either team may substitute on any throw-in, corner kick, goal kick, or any other stoppage in play (i.e. Injury).

U10B – The U10B games shall be played in a 11 v 11 game including a goalie with a minimum of 7 players. In the interest of fair play coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short, to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. You are able to reduce team size down to 10 v 10 if both coaches agree. Either team may substitute on any throw-in, corner kick, goal kick, or any other stoppage in play (i.e. Injury).

U10G – The U10G games shall be played in a 6 v 6 game including a goalie with a minimum of 5 players. In the interest of fair play coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short, to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. You are able to reduce

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

team size down to 5 v 5 if both coaches agree. Either team may substitute on any throw-in, corner kick, goal kick, or any other stoppage in play (i.e. Injury).

U12Co-Ed – *The U12 games shall be played in an 11 v 11 game including a goalie with a minimum of 7 players. In the interest of fair play coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short, to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. Substitutions shall be permitted on possession of the ball. The opposing team may only substitute if the possessing team makes a substitution.*

U14 Co-Ed – *The U14,16 games shall be played in an 11 v 11 game including a goalie with a minimum of 7 players. In the interest of fair play coaches are encouraged, but not required, to play short, to equalize the teams if a team has less than a full team to take the field. Substitutions shall be permitted on possession of the ball. The opposing team may only substitute if the possessing team makes a substitution.*

There is a 15-minute grace period for a team waiting to get to their minimum # of players before the game is considered a forfeit.

ALL - *All players must play at least half of each scheduled match. Exceptions to this rule are injuries, sickness, lack of interest, not attending practices regularly, or absence from the match. Abusing the fifty percent playing time rule of a player by a coach will result in a one game suspension of the coach.*

***** Special Note on Fair Play***** **If a team is short on players and it is mutually agreed upon for both teams to play short, the team with a full roster MAY NOT add players back to the field if they fall behind in the score. If a player shows up late for the team that is short, that player may not be added UNTIL the referee is notified, at which point in the next stoppage in play the referee will instruct the coaches that they may each add a player to the field.**

Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment

Required equipment are shoes (they don’t need to be special soccer shoes -- sneakers are fine), shin guards and a uniform. If cleats are worn, they must be either soccer shoes with rubber molded soles or other rubber molded soles that do not have metal or anything dangerous to players. A uniform includes a shirt, shorts and socks (with socks completely covering the shin guards).

The league will provide a shirt (jersey) and shorts for each player to keep. The coach will decide what style and color socks the team will wear. It is required that all players wear the same style and color socks.

Undergarments may be worn under jersey shirts/shorts with no restrictions on color.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

Goalkeepers will be provided with a goalie jersey that is gold/yellow by the league and shall be the most outer-worn layer or are allowed to wear their own goalie jersey just so long as it doesn't conflict with the other teams' uniform color.

Head covers of any color may be worn and not be attached to the shirt. If a hoodie is worn, the hood must be tucked into the jersey. Baseball caps are not permitted for field players.

A player may not wear anything dangerous either to him/herself or others. This includes bracelets, wrist-watches, hard hair holders—including alligator hair clips, almost all earrings and all chains around the neck. The referee shall check the players and their equipment prior to the start of the game. Players unable to remove earrings will not be allowed to play unless they can be covered with Band-Aids.

Casts & braces - **Players cannot wear a hard cast or braces/wraps with a hard (plastic or metal) component during the game.** You cannot wrap casts or braces with bubble wrap, foam, or any other material and allow them to play.

Law 5 -- The Referee

Under standard soccer rules, there is one center referee with full authority to make all decisions about matters of fact, and how the rules of soccer apply to them. The referee's authority extends beyond the players to the coaches and spectators, if needed. On matters of fact, such as whether a goal scored or a foul was committed, the referee's decisions are final and are not subject to appeal. The center referee may be aided by two assistant referees (or linesmen), to whom the center referee will typically defer on certain matters (offside, or whether the ball is in or out and off whom). Nevertheless, the center referee always has the power to overrule them on any matter.

Soccer is by nature both a physical contact sport and a fluid, non-stop game that is meant to flow. These aspects strongly impact the way soccer referees manage it.

1) Referees have leeway in judging the degree of contact that constitutes a foul in a particular game. A referee tries not to unnecessarily limit the game's physical contact nature, yet he will guard the players' safety, considering factors such as the skill and age of the players.

2) When judging when to let play continue, or when to call a foul, referees try not to interrupt the flow of the game except where the foul has an effect on play and calling it is necessary to insure fairness to the fouled team. In particular:

- referees refrain from calling relatively trivial fouls or technicalities.
- even where the foul is nontrivial, referees may let play continue where that appears more advantageous to the team fouled than calling a foul to stop play and award them a free kick ("the advantage rule").

3) When play does stop, the referee's intervention is usually limited to a quickly given signal: which team (direction) gets the ball, how the game is to be restarted (e.g., free kick or throw-in) and from where. In most situations, the team awarded the ball has the right to restart play immediately as soon as they can retrieve the ball to the appropriate spot, with no need to wait on the other team or on the referee.

4) Soccer referees often don't explain their calls. They use the whistle to stop play, and then an arm signal to indicate how play will restart -- not to explain why it was stopped. For instance, after a goal is scored the referee points to the center circle, because the next play will be a kick-off. If there's a foul, the players

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

involved usually know what happened, and just want to know that a free kick has been awarded. Most referees will explain calls if asked, however they are not obliged to.

5) An important concept is "advantage." This rule says, don't stop play for a foul if the play continuing on the field is already working or expected to work to the benefit of the fouled team. The signal for advantage is for the referee to extend both arms forward and say, "Play on," and/or "Advantage." If a referee applies advantage, but then sees that the play isn't working out as well for the fouled team as he thought, he can still change his mind and award the free kick instead, within a few seconds.

6) A referee can change or correct a call if play hasn't already been restarted. Sometimes the referee will receive information from a linesman regarding something he didn't see that causes him to change a call.

7) Play is not always stopped for injured players. The law says the referee should stop for a "serious" injury but let play continue until the ball goes out of play for minor injuries. The dividing line between serious and minor injuries is up to the referee, although referees are usually quicker to stop the game when younger children are involved. Another factor in the decision is whether a strong attacking play is going on - referees are more likely to let play continue, unless there is a seriously injured defender. (A referee must consider the possibility of faked injuries to stop an opponents' attack.)

8) The referee's authority over the players and other aspects of a match begins when he enters the area of the field and continues until he departs after the conclusion of the match. This means that misconduct that occurs before or after a game, or during half time, can be dealt with. For instance, players fighting before the game can be forbidden from playing, just as if they received a red card.

9) The referee has the authority to manage the game, including terminating it if things get out of control. However, he doesn't have authority to assign a winner, except by reporting the number of goals that were scored. Should a game be terminated, the referee sends a report on the game to the league, and the league will decide what to do.

10) The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether or not a goal is scored and the results of the match are final. The decisions of the referee and all other match officials must be respected. The referee may not change a restart decision on realizing that it is incorrect or on the advice of another match official if play has restarted.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 - A single coach from each team will be permitted on the field of play to facilitate instructing their players. A single referee shall officiate the game. Referees are expected to be lenient in the enforcement of the rules and keep the game moving. The coach is permitted to hold hands and encourage players to participate in the game. The coach is not allowed to be directly involved in the game. For example, the coach is not allowed to pick a child up and swing them at the ball or to directly play the ball on the field. Encourage the children to play.

U6 – A single referee shall officiate the game. A single coach from each team will be permitted on the field of play to facilitate instructing their players.

U8 – A three-man system shall officiate the game consisting of one certified referee and two linesman referees. Coaches shall remain on their respected halves on their designated sideline out of the field of play.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

U10 – *A three-man system shall officiate the game consisting of one certified center referee and two linesman referees. Coaches shall remain on their respected halves on their designated sideline out of the field of play.*

U12 – *A three-man system shall officiate the game consisting of one certified center referee and two linesman referees. Coaches shall remain on their respected halves on their designated sideline out of the field of play.*

U14,16 – *A three-man system shall officiate the game consisting of one certified center referee and two linesman referees. Coaches shall remain on their respected halves on their designated sideline out of the field of play.*

Law 6 -- The Assistant Referee (Linesman)

In an “official” three-man system, the center referee has two Assistant Refs, formerly known as Linesmen. The ARs are positioned on the touchlines and as such are usually better placed to call the ball in or out of play, and offside. However, the center referee makes all calls (he has the only whistle) issues all yellow and red cards and can always overrule or ignore an AR’s advice. Referees typically delegate the following judgments to ARs:

- When a player should be penalized for being offside.
- When the ball has gone out of play over the touch (side) line or goal (end) line, which side gets the ball and whether the restart should be by throw-in, goal kick, or corner kick.
- when a team requests and is properly entitled to substitute.
- when a foul or misconduct has occurred out of the view of the center referee.

An AR’s top priority is to monitor offside. Offside judgments are the calls where center referees are most dependent on their AR’s. This is why AR’s stay positioned with the next to last defender rather than with play around the ball; it is entirely proper for linesmen to turn away from and maybe miss the ball going out when necessary to keep up with potential offside.

AR’s do not signal offside merely because a player is in an offside position. Rather, they consider all the factors in Law 11 and only make the call if the player is involved in active play.

If an AR sees a foul but sees that the center referee also saw the incident, the linesman will usually not signal, even if she has a “better” or “closer” view. The AR only signals a foul if she is convinced the center referee’s view is obstructed, and that the referee would make the same call if able to see it.

When the ball goes out and the AR signals who should get the ball, the center referee will often defer to the linesman’s call, the center referee’s call prevails if different from the AR’s signal (even if the AR supposedly had a superior view). Sometimes, however, the referee may change the call if she realizes the AR knows better.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

See TYSA modifications under Law 5.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

Law 7 -- The Duration of the Match

The laws define an official adult men's soccer game as two 45-minute halves. Most youth games are shorter with halves typically ranging from 20 to 40 minutes, varying according to the players' age. Both halves must be the same length, and there must be a break in between. Because play is continuous, there are no time outs, and there is usually no visible clock. The referee keeps official time, and you should keep a copy on your own watch. Each half will usually go on beyond the prescribed length, however, because the referee is supposed to add time to compensate for time "lost" due to injuries, lost balls, or other abnormal situations that prevent play. Even though soccer games have a strictly defined official length and end when that time runs out, the added time (which is entirely up to the referee) makes the exact duration hard for an observer to predict exactly. Sometimes games are packed together so tightly that the referee cannot add as much time as he fairly should. It is extremely rare for a game to end while a shot is in the air, or while a strong attacking move is taking place. Many referees wait until the first minor lull in play (or ball out of play) after time runs out, or until the team that is leading gains control of the ball, before ending the game. Remember the time to be added to make up for losses is entirely up to the ref.

Troy Rules Modifications:

U4 – *The length of the game shall be two running 15-minute halves with a 5-minute break at halftime. There shall be no switching sides between periods.*

U6 – *The length of the game shall be two running 20-minute halves with a 5-minute break at halftime. There shall be no switching sides between periods.*

U8 – *The length of the game shall be two running 25-minute halves with a 5-minute break at halftime. There shall be no switching sides between periods.*

U10B – *The length of the game shall be two running 25-minute halves with a 5-minute break at halftime. Teams shall switch sides at halftime.*

U10G - *The length of the game shall be 4 running 10-minute quarters with a 5-minute break at halftime and a 2-minute water break after the 1st and 3rd quarters. Teams shall switch sides at halftime.*

U12 – *The length of the game shall be two running 35-minute halves with a 10-minute break at halftime. Teams shall switch sides at halftime.*

U14 – *The length of the game shall be two running 40-minute halves with a 10-minute break at halftime. Teams shall switch sides at halftime.*

Law 8 -- The Start and Restart of Play

Before the game, the two teams' captains meet and hold a coin toss at the center circle of the field. The visiting team calls the coin toss. The winner of the coin toss chooses either the ball or direction they want to go. The loser of the coin toss gets to decide what the winner did not choose. The teams swap ends at the kick-off of the second half. The ball is in play once it is kicked and clearly moves. If the player taking the kick-off touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick, or for a handball offence, a direct free kick is awarded. *All players, except the player taking the kick-off, must be in their own half of the field of play.

After a goal, the team that was scored upon takes the kick-off to re-start the game.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

Most stoppages have a defined restart -- for example, if the ball goes over a touchline, the restart is a throw-in. When the referee stops play on his own initiative while the ball is in play -- such as for injury, broken goalpost, or spectator on the field, misconduct or under situations where no other restart is specified -- the restart is a direct kick for the team that had possession of the ball at the time play was stopped.

If play is stopped due to injury, the injured player will be required to leave the field until next legal substitution.

Law 9 -- Ball In and Out of Play

Play is started or restarted with a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, free kick, kick-off, depending on the situation. If the restart is conducted properly, the ball is then in play until it goes out or the referee stops play.

The ball is out of play when;

- it has wholly passed over the goal line or touchline on the ground or in the air.
- when play has been stopped by the referee.
- it touches a match official, remains on the field of play and a team starts a promising attack or the ball goes directly in the goal or the team in possession of the ball changes in all of these cases, play is restarted with an indirect free kick for the team who was in possession of the ball at the time it was last touched.

The key is the location of the ball, not the players or their feet -- if the ball goes out in the air and then curves back in, it is out. However, if a player's natural momentum carries him/her off the field, play continues if the ball remains wholly or partly inside.

If you think you see a foul, but the referee hasn't blown the whistle, play on -- the ball is still in play. It's also still in play if it hits the goal post, crossbar, corner flag.

Law 10 -- The Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the entire ball passes completely beyond the goal line, between the goal posts, under the crossbar. It doesn't matter who touched it last. It doesn't matter if the goalkeeper is holding it. **All that matters is the location of the ball.** The referee is not allowed to award goals -- they must all be earned; if any "outside influence" such as a spectator enters the field and interferes with a goal by touching the ball, the goal does not count, even if the ball would have scored without the interference.

There are certain situations where an apparent "goal" doesn't count -- you can't score against either team on a throw-in or indirect free kick; you can't score against yourself on a direct free kick, goal kick, or corner kick. In those cases, if the ball goes directly into the goal without being touched after the initial throw or kick, the restart is as if the ball had missed the goal (goal kick or corner kick).

If a foul occurs in the play immediately preceding a goal, the referee may disallow the score, even if he didn't have time to blow the whistle before the ball entered the goal -- as long as the foul happened first. This occurs most often where the referee didn't see the linesman's offside flag right away.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4—U14 – Referees shall use coach’s/assistant coach’s Sports Engine roster to check in players at the start of the game. Referees shall record the score on the “Game” card and both coaches and referees shall sign the card at the completion of the match verifying the score. The Game card shall also record any cautions, injuries or ejections from the game.

Law 11 -- Offside

1) OFFSIDE POSITION

It is not an offense to be in an offside position.

A player is in an offside position if:

- Any part of the head, body or feet is in the opponents’ half (excluding the halfway line) and
- Any part of the head, body or feet is nearer to the opponents’ goal line than both the ball and the second to last opponent. (Usually but not always, the last opponent is the goalkeeper and the second to last opponent is the deepest defender)

The hands and arms of all players, including the goalkeepers, are not considered. For the purpose of determining offside, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit.

A player is not in an offside position if level with the:

- Second-last opponent or
- Last two opponents

2) OFFSIDE OFFENCE

A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched* by a teammate is only penalized on becoming involved in active play by:

- Interfering with play by playing or touching a ball passed or touched by a teammate or
- Interfering with an opponent by:
 - Preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent’s line of vision or
 - Challenging an opponent for the ball or
 - Clearly attempting to play a ball which is close when this action impacts on an opponent or

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

- Making an obvious action which clearly impacts on the ability of an opponent to play the ball.

Or

- Gaining an advantage by playing the ball or interfering with an opponent when it has:
 - Rebounded or been deflected off the goalpost, crossbar, match official or an opponent.
 - Been deliberately saved by an opponent.

***The first point of contact of the 'play' or 'touch' of the ball should be used.**

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who deliberately played* the ball, including by deliberate handball, is not considered to have gained an advantage, unless it was a deliberate save by an opponent.

*'Deliberate play' (excluding deliberate handball) is when a player has control of the ball with the possibility of:

- Passing the ball to a teammate
- Gaining possession of the ball
- Clearing the ball (by kicking it or heading it)

If the pass, attempt to gain possession or clearance by the player in control of the ball is inaccurate or unsuccessful, this does not negate the fact that the player 'deliberately played' the ball.

The following criteria should be used, as appropriate, as indicators that a player was in control of the ball and, as a result, can be considered to have 'deliberately played' the ball.

- The ball traveled from distance and the player had a clear view of it.
- The ball was not moving quickly.
- The direction of the ball was not unexpected.
- The player had time to coordinate their body movement, i.e. it was not a case of instinctive stretching or jumping, or a movement that achieved limited contact/control.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

- A ball moving on the ground is easier to play than a ball in the air.

A 'save' is when a player stops, or attempts to stop, a ball which is going into or very close to the goal with any part of the body except the hands/arms (unless the goalkeeper is within the penalty area).

In situations where:

- A player moving from, or standing in, an offside position is in the way of an opponent and interferes with the movement of the opponent towards the ball, this is an offside offence if it impacts on the ability of the opponent to play or challenge for the ball; if the player moves into the way of an opponent and impedes the opponent's progress(blocks the opponent), the offense should be penalized under law 12.
- A player in an offside position is moving towards the ball with the intention of playing the ball and is fouled before playing or attempting to play the ball, or challenging an opponent for the ball, the foul is penalized as it has occurred before the offside offense.
- An offense is committed against a player in an offside position who is already playing or attempting to play the ball, or challenging an opponent for the ball, the offside offense is penalized as it has occurred before the foul challenge.

3) **No Offense**

There is no offside offence if a player receives the ball directly from:

- A goal kick
- A throw in
- A corner kick
- The opposing team

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

An important feature of offside is that the offside position and the participation in play are judged by the referee at the moment the ball is played by an attacking teammate.

Some examples to note:

- If an attacker is in an onside position when the ball is passed forward and he/she then runs past the defense to get it, that is **not offside** even if he/she is beyond the second to last defender when he/she reaches the ball.
- If an attacker is in an offside position when the ball is passed and then runs back into an onside position (such as into his/her own half) to collect it, **that is offside**, because offside position was determined when the teammate played the ball.

- You cannot be offside when the opponents have control of the ball, offside is judged at the moment a teammate plays the ball. So, if the goalkeeper, after controlling the ball with his hands, accidentally throws it to an offside opponent, there is no offense, therefore, **no offside**.
- If the goalkeeper saves a shot, which rebounds to an attacker who was in an offside position when the shot was taken, gains control, shoots and scores, **that is offside** and the goal does not count. The attacker gained advantage from being in that position, even though he/she just happened to be there as a result from an earlier play. Notice that in this case, the goalkeeper's save did not cancel the potential to be offside because the defense did not gain control, the attacking teams original "play" continued and the offside determination made by the referee or linesman when the shot was taken, continued to apply.
- If the goalkeeper is able to gain control of the ball, many referees will not call offside even though the offside player is in a good position to play the rebound if one occurs. Without the rebound, the offside player doesn't become involved (he/she does not gain advantage from being in the offside position) so the referee ignores the potential infraction.
- If the assistant referee is not quite sure just who is or who isn't "involved in active play" at the moment the ball is played, he/she may wait a few seconds to let the play continue before determining whether to make the decision of offside. ARs are instructed that if they are not completely sure, don't call offside. Some observers, noting such delay by an AR, conclude that participation by offside players should be judged only when the ball is received rather than passed. This is incorrect, an AR will only delay an offside call only when unable to determine participation immediately.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

Offside is normally called by the assistant referee who tries to stay even with the second to last defender in order to judge whether any attackers are farther downfield therefore, in an offside position. If he/she sees an offside infraction, the linesman will raise their flag and remain at that position until acknowledged by the referee. The linesman then indicates the location of the restart, which is an indirect free kick for the defense. The indirect free kick is awarded at the point where the offside player was when the ball was played by his/her teammate.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – *No offsides.*

U6 – *No offsides.*

U8 – *No offsides.*

U10B – *Offsides will be called as described above.*

U10G -

- **Build-Out Line (BOL):** The field is generally divided into thirds with a dotted line drawn across the field (often 14-15 yards in front of each goal).
- **Offside Zone:** Offsides is only called between the **build-out line and the goal line**.
- **No Offsides Zone:** Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build-out line.
- **Definition of Offside:** An attacker is in an offside position if any part of their head, body, or feet is in the opponent's build-out area and closer to the goal line than the second-to-last defender (usually the last defender) when the ball is played.
- **Exceptions:** There is no offside on a goal kick, corner kick, or throw-in.

U12 – *Offsides will be called as described above.*

U14 – *Offsides will be called as described above.*

Law 12 -- Fouls and Misconduct

This law provides the referee with the tools to maintain order in the dynamic, physical game of soccer. It is important to remember that calling fouls is almost entirely a **matter of judgment** -- the law names the fouls but does not describe most of them. It is up to the referee to know what is and isn't "fair play".

Referees use the term foul to refer to unfair play that occurs on the field while the game is underway, that results in a free kick or penalty kick. These are divided into penal fouls that lead to direct free kicks, and technical fouls that lead to indirect free kicks. Misconduct covers offenses against the spirit of the game that can lead to yellow and red cards. Misconduct can occur while the ball is in or out of play, before and after the game, on or off the field. During the game, misconduct is usually also associated with a penal or technical foul; hence the restart for misconduct is usually the restart for that foul.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

(a) Direct free kick fouls

The direct free kick fouls are also called “penal” fouls -- if one of them is called against a defender within his own penalty area, the other team is awarded a penalty kick (see Law 14). Because of this severe consequence, referees often require a clear-cut foul with visible effect before making the call. If a “penal” foul occurs on the line bounding the penalty area, then it is within the area -- lines are part of the area they bound.

These direct free kick fouls can only occur (a) on the field, (b) against an opponent [except handling, which is against the ball], and (c) while the ball is in play. If the three conditions are not met, an action can be misconduct leading to a yellow or red card, but it can't be a foul in the strict sense, and the restart would not be a direct free kick or penalty kick.

Tripping, pushing, jumping at, striking, kicking

These fouls are for actions that are similar to normal play, which become fouls when they are carried out in a manner the referee judges to be “careless, reckless or with excessive force.” Because the actions covered are so similar to normal play, many referees will call the fouls only when there is some effect on play (the fouling team gains possession or stops their opponents' attack), if there is severe contact, or if there is a deliberate attempt to play the man instead of the ball. In the case of tripping, striking and kicking, it is also an offense merely to attempt the action -- actual contact is not required.

Deliberate tripping, or clumsy play that results in a trip, is easy to recognize, as well as where a player slides and possibly tries for the ball, but it is so late there's no real chance to do anything but bring down the dribbler. However, if a defender makes a clean play on the ball and then the attacker simply happens to trip over his outstretched leg while he's lying on the ground, that is probably not a trip, nor is it if the defender traps the ball so that the attacker, carried on by his momentum, falls over it.

Striking suggests hitting with the hands or fists but is not limited to those. The elbows or knees can strike, and it's even striking to throw the ball at an opponent. Many cases of striking are also unsporting behavior [yellow card -- caution] or violent conduct [red card -- send-off].

Pushing means the obvious pushing with the hands, but also includes elbows, general play with the arms extended from the body, and pushing with the body or thighs. There's usually a lot of pushing with younger kids, which is often ignored when it has no effect on play. Even with older players, if the victim can fight it off, then many refs are inclined to turn a blind eye.

Players jostling for position on balls in the air can lead to obstruction, holding, pushing and/or tripping. The tripping foul on a high ball, a.k.a. bridging, is when one player goes in under his jumping opponent, who then falls over him. This action is potentially very dangerous, while looking quite innocent -- it often looks like the victim committed the foul.

“Jumping at” is a form of reckless, dangerous play where the opposing player, more than the ball, is the target. One case is where two players are trying to head a ball in the air, and one is properly positioned underneath the point of contact, while the other player, initially out of position, comes flying in from the side and collides with the opponent at the same moment as they both head the ball. Even though they are both “going for the ball,” it's not fair play.

Kicking usually means kicking an opponent (even if by accident), which can happen through careless play when opposing players try to play the ball simultaneously. It can also mean a deliberate attempt to kick an opponent that misses. Accidental kicks that miss are usually ignored or considered dangerous play.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

These groups of fouls require a lot of referee judgment as to whether the game needs to be stopped. An apparent foul may be trifling (not rough, no effect on play) or the foul may be real, but advantage should be applied (the fouled team kept its attack going anyway). Just because one player has her hands on an opponent's back, or an elbow in her side, that does not mean that a foul must be called -- even though the action may meet the definition of the foul. Referees often distinguish "playing the man" and "playing the ball" based on the player's eyes -- to play the ball is to look at it.

Holding, spitting, handling

These fouls are somewhat more clear-cut than the pushing-holding-jumping at group, largely because they are not simple extensions of "normal play." The most obvious is spitting at an opponent, or attempting to spit at, which is obviously not part of a soccer game (and it leads to a sending-off or red card).

Holding is commonly grabbing an opponent's uniform -- one reason referees will ask players to keep their shirts tucked in is to make this more difficult. However, if the held player is still able to play effectively, the referee may ignore the foul by putting it in the advantage category. There are other forms of holding besides the obvious grabbing with the hands, including using an arm or thigh to shield an opponent off the ball (these might alternatively be interpreted as pushing), and the two-on-one "sandwich," where a player is pinned between two opponents.

Handling the ball involves deliberately playing the ball with the hand or arm, for example moving the hand/arm towards the ball, player touches the ball with their hand/arm when it has made their body unnaturally bigger—this is done when the position of their hand/arm is not a consequence of or justifiable by the player's movement for a specific situation. It is also a hand ball foul if these circumstances result in a score in the opponent's goal directly from the hand/arm, even if it was accidental.

It is not a foul every time the ball makes contact with a hand. Cases where the ball strikes a player's hand entirely through accident or the actions of other players are not fouls providing the player did not contribute to the outcome. Guarding space with the arms held out is not permitted. A reflex action to protect oneself may not be called, although it should be if the player has enough time to play the ball another way. For players defending a free kick in a wall, as long as they position their arms for self-protection before the ball is kicked, and don't move them while the ball is in flight, a foul should not be called if they are struck on the arms at relatively close range.

Tackling and charging offenses

As with fouls for tripping, etc., these offenses are "normal play" that is not executed correctly. Indeed, tackling and charging are not merely normal play; they are the very essence of soccer defense and therefore cannot be forbidden by the referee -- although they can become fouls. This is clearly a judgment call. With young players, this foul will occur rarely, while in a game of older kids or adults, the referee will need to "draw the line" somewhere and stick to it, based on his perception of the players and their expectations.

Charging is an act by a defensive player to gain possession of the ball through body contact. For a charge to be legal, the contact should be a shoulder-to-shoulder action, with arms close to the body; the charger should have at least one foot on the ground; and the ball should be within playing distance (a yard). If the charging player leaves the ground, then it's likely to be an illegal charge, or jumping at.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

The player with the ball is permitted some leeway in keeping his body in the way to shield the ball and fend off opponents. How much physical contact is permitted in these situations varies according to the age and sex of the players. Slide tackles are entirely legal, and if the tackler gets the ball and afterwards the opponent trips over his outstretched leg, that isn't a foul. However, there is a distinction between a slide tackle and a trip, and this is an area where the referee's positioning and judgment come to the fore, because it is often easy to see exactly what happened. Hip checking (a defender going in sideways but not playing with the shoulder) is not a legal charge.

There are times when an apparently legal charge isn't legal. If the two players involved are not within playing distance of the ball, then the charge isn't legal -- it might be obstruction [indirect free kick], holding [direct free kick], or simply an illegal charge. If an attacker with the ball has his back to the opponents' goal, then he can expect some pressure from behind to be tolerated by the ref; if he's facing the goal and has a shooting opportunity, a hard charge on his back is more likely to be a foul.

The referee often bases the call on whether the defender is "**playing the ball**" or "**playing the man**" -- the latter is the foul, such as riding the player away from the ball. If two defenders simultaneously play the man and make a sandwich, that is usually holding.

(b) Technical (indirect free kick) fouls

The indirect free kick is for less serious offenses, offenses not directly involving an opponent, and also relatively technical violations described in other laws such as playing the ball twice on a dead-ball restart. Some referees try to make effective use of the flexibility provided by this "less serious" offense and use it to steer the game in a more sporting direction, by awarding an indirect free kick (usually combined with a talking-to) rather than a caution for minor unsporting acts such as time wasting. As with the direct free kick fouls, these offenses can only be called while the ball is in play and must occur on the field.

Impeding (a.k.a. obstruction)

Impeding involves getting in an opponent's way to screen and prevent him from reaching or challenging for the ball. It is generally not a contact foul -- if it is executed with physical contact, the referee may call holding or pushing (direct free kick) instead. What the referee looks for is playing the man vs. playing the ball. However, it is perfectly legal to shield the ball to maintain possession. The key question: is the ball within playing distance? (Playing distance is defined as close enough that the player can reach out and touch it if he wishes.) If the ball is that close, then shielding is a perfectly legal form of "playing" it.

The most common example of legal shielding is protecting the ball from an opponent while it runs out of bounds to gain the restart. Illegal impeding may be a player deliberately running in an opponent's way to make him go around, so that a teammate will be able to reach the ball first, or the ball will run out of play.

A variation is preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball, once he has it in his hands, which also leads to an indirect free kick. A certain amount of accidental obstruction also occurs in a normal game, and it is typically ignored.

Dangerous play

In its most succinct form, dangerous play is any play that looks dangerous, and that's how it's usually called with very young players. Examples include kicking at a high ball near another player's face or trying to head a ball near the ground while another player is playing the ball with his feet. These calls can be made whether the other player is an opponent or a teammate. It's also dangerous play if a player's actions cause

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

an opponent to refrain from making a normal play because of the risk of injury -- a player who accidentally falls and lies on the ball prevents other players from playing it because they don't want to kick her.

At higher levels, the referee is unlikely to make the call unless the play is very obviously dangerous (such as an overhead bicycle kick in the middle of a crowd), or the play involves preventing an opponent from making his normal play. For example, if a player ends up accidentally lying on the ball on the ground, other players will be reluctant to play it out of fear of injuring him; the foul is called to compensate them for being prevented from making their "normal" play.

With younger kids, dangerous play is called more often, which leads some observers to conclude that high kicking, low heading, and playing on the ground are always forbidden. That is not the law -- these actions are dangerous play only when they endanger someone, and with older players probably only when the opponents are affected also -- there must be another player nearby for there to be dangerous play.

Dangerous play also applies to standard ball challenges and tackles that increase the potential for injury, even if the player playing dangerously misses the ball and the opponent. The slide tackle from behind so hopeless that it misses by a foot or two is an example -- the referee may call dangerous play to make an example.

The goalkeeper

An indirect free kick is awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their own penalty area, commits any of the following offences:

- "Double possession" is a foul that occurs when the keeper puts the ball into play (i.e., deliberately puts it on the ground to be played with the feet by herself or a teammate), and then handles it again. This rule is designed to keep the ball in play. It should not be double possession if the keeper accidentally drops the ball while trying to kick it and then picks it up again.
- handling a ball deliberately passed to the goalkeeper by a teammate. This rule is designed to prevent endless back-and-forth passing between the keeper and a fullback. The kick needs to be deliberate -- it's okay for the keeper to handle the ball if a pass or shot on goal is deflected towards her by a teammate attempting to block it, or if the teammate makes a desperation clear to "anywhere."
- handling a ball thrown-in by a teammate. This rule is designed to keep play moving along without having the keeper "withdraw the ball from play" by picking it up unnecessarily. If another player from either team touches the ball before the keeper, this rule doesn't apply.
- wasting time while holding the ball. Referees are instructed to award an indirect free kick if the keeper holds the ball for more than "**six**" seconds without putting it into play.

Head balls

Heading the ball is not permitted for U4-U10 age divisions.

Head balls are allowed at the U12 division with the exception of when the goalie punts the ball into the air. If that occurrence happens it is considered a foul and will result in the kicking team being awarded an indirect kick at the spot of the foul.

Head balls are permitted at the U14 division and the "goalie punt" foul does not apply for this division.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

(c) Misconduct

Misconduct refers to the caution [yellow card] and sending-off [red card], which are the referee's strongest weapons against actions contrary to the spirit of the game and fair play. The fouls mentioned earlier are mostly "ordinary play carried to excess," whereas misconduct covers deliberate acts of poor sportsmanship that go entirely beyond the realm of fair play. The punishment for misconduct is given personally to the player, in addition to the free kick awarded against his/her team.

Certain specific acts are defined in the laws of the game as misconduct, such as spitting, dissent, and unsporting behavior. However, many referees will "go up the ladder" and try to stem bad behavior through warnings and force of personality before showing cards. Other referees will immediately reach into their pocket for the piece of plastic.

Yellow card offenses generally cover bad sportsmanship and disruption of the game -- but not acts that cause injury or affect the score. A good example is "persistent infringement" -- a succession of "ordinary" fouls. The referee can ask a player to leave the field after issuing them a yellow card. This is a common practice to maintain order and ensure that the game is played fairly. The player may substitute back into the game at the next eligible official stoppage. Red cards are reserved for acts completely against the spirit of the game (e.g., handling the ball to prevent an obvious goal) or totally inappropriate behavior (e.g., spitting or fighting).

Although misconduct fouls are usually serious, the referee may give advantage and not stop play immediately to show the card. If misconduct occurs without an accompanying foul while the ball is in play -- this often happens with dissent -- and the referee stops play, the restart is an indirect free kick for the other team if the misconduct was committed by a player and occurred on the field, or indirect free kick for the team with possession in all other cases. If the misconduct is serious enough for a red card, the referee will almost always stop play immediately. If misconduct occurs while the ball is out of play, the restart is what it would have been -- for instance, if the ball went out over a touchline, the restart is a throw-in, whether or not misconduct occurs before the ball is put back into play.

Two of the most serious red card offenses are violent conduct and serious foul play. Generally, serious foul play is something totally outside the realm of fair play, but still part of the game in some sense, such as an extremely violent tackle from behind which injures the victim's legs -- assuming the tackle is an attempt to play the ball. Violent conduct, in contrast, is simply fighting without regard to the game. In many leagues violent conduct results in a longer suspension than serious foul play.

Two specific forms of serious foul play [red card] that have been singled out in recent years are denying a goal through handling the ball and denying an "obvious goal-scoring opportunity." Denying a goal is a player other than the keeper stopping a would-be goal with his hands. Denying an obvious opportunity to score means a foul to prevent a shot committed against an attacker who (a) has the ball or is about to get it, (b) is heading towards the goal with at most one defender ahead of him, and (c) has a reasonable shooting opportunity. Because of the required conditions, these often also lead to penalty kicks.

According to the FIFA laws, which are followed by the national federations such as USSF, only players and substitutes should be shown red or yellow cards, although many competitions permit, encourage or

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

even require showing a card when anyone is cautioned or sent off. Coaches and other bench personnel may be “warned” and “dismissed” without cards, but not “cautioned” and “sent off.” The difference in terminology is minor but ask if the referee says he’s warning you -- it may be a formal caution.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

- **U4** – *There shall be no slide tackling. Coaches are to encourage their players to stay on their feet and chase after the ball.*
- **U6** – *There shall be no slide tackling. Coaches are to encourage their players to stay on their feet. If the player is persistent the referee will have the player substituted out of the game for instruction by the coach. Also, there shall be no “camping out” in front of the goal. Camping out is defined as standing in front of the goal and remaining there while the ball is on the other side of the field. The players should be encouraged to move out and chase after the ball.*
- **U8** – *There shall be no slide tackling. Coaches are to encourage their players to stay on their feet. If the player is persistent the referee will have the player substituted out of the game for instruction by the coach.*
- **U10** - *There shall be no slide tackling. Coaches are to encourage their players to stay on their feet. If the player is persistent the referee will caution the player and be substituted out of the game for instruction by the coach.*
- **U12** - *There shall be no slide tackling. Coaches are to encourage their players to stay on their feet. If the player is persistent the referee will caution the player and be substituted out of the game for instruction by the coach player or eject the player from the game.*
- **U14** - *There shall be no slide tackling. Coaches are to encourage their players to stay on their feet. If the player is persistent the referee will caution the player and be substituted out of the game for instruction by the coach player or eject the player from the game.*
- **ALL** - *When a player is sent off (issued a red card) or a coach is ejected from the game, they must leave the field for the remaining duration of the match, and they are suspended from the next league match for that team. There will be no substitution for the sent off player. If a player receives a yellow card, he must be removed from the field of play. He can be substituted for, and he is able to return to the game at the next permissible opportunity.*

Law 13 -- Free Kicks

Free kicks are the restart after a foul or other infraction. The referee’s signal is a whistle to stop play, followed by an arm pointing in the direction the kicking team is going. Then the question is whether the free kick is direct or indirect. A goal can be scored directly from a direct free kick but not from an indirect free kick. On an indirect free kick, a second player must touch the ball after it’s in play for a goal to count. The referee signals an indirect free kick by holding one arm straight up and a direct free kick is signaled with his arm pointing toward the goal. Both kinds of free kicks are taken from the spot of the foul, which the referee will often indicate, especially if it’s not clear.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

The term “free kick” indicates that the kick is to be free from interference and may be kicked in any direction. Consequently, all opponents must move at least 10 yards away in all directions. The referee may stop play and get the opponents back if they are too close, or he may wait for the kicking team either to ask him to move them back or take a quick kick. If the referee does intervene, he should direct the kicker to wait for a whistle before kicking, and have the defenders move back to a point he indicates, where they usually form a “wall.” This is called a “ceremonial free kick.”

If your team has the free kick, you are permitted to put the ball down and restart immediately (a “quick free kick”) after having retrieved the ball to the spot of the foul. If the opponents are disorganized or short-handed in this part of the field, you may want to get going immediately, and there is no need to wait for a signal, unless the referee directs you to wait -- the whistle that stops play for the foul is also a signal that a quick free kick may be taken.

If the other team has the free kick, your players should back away the required 10 yards, or else risk a caution [yellow card] for “failing to respect the required distance.” You might be able to delay the kickers a little, or retreat a bit less than 10 yards, but many referees are quite properly hard-nosed on this issue and caution promptly. If it’s a ceremonial kick and the referee blows the whistle for the kick, your players can’t dash forward -- the whistle is only to tell the kickers that it’s okay to kick, and the defenders have to continue to wait until the actual kick.

As long as they’re 10 yards from the spot of the kick, defenders may form a “wall” between the ball and their own goal. They may jump after the ball is kicked but may not leap about beforehand to distract the kicker. Members of the attacking team may also join the wall; provided they get there first an attacker might vacate his position just as the kick is made, leaving a gap through which the ball can pass.

Ideally, a free kick should be totally “quick” or totally “ceremonial” -- the referee should either not intervene at all, or he should tell the kicking team to wait and have the kick taken only on his whistle. However, sometimes the referee intervenes “a little bit” to talk the defenders back the 10 yards, distracting one or both teams, without telling the kicker to wait for a whistle.

There is an exception to the rule that a free kick is taken from the spot of the foul and the opponents must be 10 yards away -- these change for an indirect free kick awarded inside the opponents’ goal area (right in front of their goal), which might happen for a technical violation by the goalkeeper. In that case, the kick is taken from the nearest point on the boundary of the area (the 6 yd line), and defenders may occupy the goal line between the goal posts, even if that’s less than 10 yards from the ball.

Another set of exceptions applies for free kicks within a team’s own penalty area. (a) If the free kick is awarded within the goal area, then it may be taken from anywhere within the goal area, just like a goal kick. (b) The opposing team must entirely vacate the penalty area when the kick is taken and until the ball leaves the penalty area. (c) The ball is not in play until it has entirely left the penalty area. If the ball fails to leave the area, or is touched before it leaves, the kick should be retaken.

Except for the free kick from within one’s own penalty area, the ball is “in play” once it is “kicked and moves.” In practice and according to directives from USSF, this means once it’s been touched by a foot. But technically, on an indirect free kick the first player needs only to touch the ball with his foot, and the second player can then try to score. (Defenders may rush forward as soon as the ball is touched.) It’s not permitted, however, for the first player to play the ball twice on either a direct free kick or an indirect free kick.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – *All free kicks are direct. On free kicks the defending team must be a minimum of 3 yards from the ball.*

U6 – *All free kicks are direct. On free kicks the defending team must be a minimum of 3 yards from the ball.*

U8 – *All free kicks are direct. On free kicks the defending team must be a minimum of 5 yards from the ball.*

U10 – *All free kicks are direct. On free kicks the defending team must be a minimum of 7 yards from the ball.*

U12 – *No modification to this rule except that the defending team must be a minimum of 8 yards from the ball.*

U14 – *No modification to this rule.*

Law 14 -- Penalty Kicks

A penalty kick is a ceremonial form of direct free kick, taken from the penalty spot marked on the field directly in front of the goal. A penalty kick is awarded when one of the direct free kick or “penal” fouls is committed by the defenders within their own penalty area. The referee indicates a penalty shot by pointing to the penalty mark. A penalty kick is similar to a direct free kick, except:

- All players except the goalkeeper must be behind the ball (i.e., at least 12 yards from the goal line) until it is kicked.
- The kicker must be clearly identified, both to the referee and, more importantly, to the goalkeeper.
- All players except the goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and more than 10 yards from the ball (there’s a 10-yard arc on the edge of the penalty area for just this purpose) until the ball is kicked.
- The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line between the posts. The keeper may move laterally, but not forward, before the ball is kicked.
- The kicker must move relatively straight ahead, with no feinting.
- The ball must be kicked forward.
- The kicker must wait for the referee’s signal (whistle) before kicking.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – *There are no penalty kicks in the U4 game.*

U6 – *There are no penalty kicks in the U6 game.*

U8 – *No modification to this rule except the penalty spot is 6 yards from the goal line instead of 12 yards.*

U10 – *No modification to this rule except the penalty spot is 8 yards from the goal line instead of 12*

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

yards.

U12 – *No modification to this rule except the penalty spot is 10 yards from the goal line instead of 12 yards.*

U14 – *No modification to this rule.*

Law 15 – The Throw-In

A throw-in is the restart when the ball goes out of play over one of the touchlines. It's awarded to the team that did not touch the ball last. A throw-in may be indicated by the assistant referee pointing his flag in the direction the throwing team is going, or by the referee with his arm. As always, the referee's call takes precedence in a conflict. The throw-in should be executed from within a yard of where the ball went out. If the referee or assistant points or otherwise indicates where to take the throw, then be sure to go to that spot. If not, then it probably doesn't matter if you're a few yards away -- but if you gain a discernible advantage by being in the wrong spot, the referee can require the throw be retaken or rule it a bad throw and give the throw-in to the other team.

A throw-in needs merely to touch the plane of the field to be in play. If it then curves out, that's a throw-in for the other team. The field is three-dimensional, and the ball does not need to touch the ground to be in play.

The thrower should face the field, have both feet on the ground, use both hands, and throw the ball from behind his head over the top of his head. The thrower's feet need to remain on the ground until the ball has left his hands. If these technical requirements are not met, the referee can award the throw-in to the other team. There are some technical law issues the team taking a throw-in should know:

- If you throw the ball to your own goalkeeper, the keeper cannot handle the ball. They can play it with their feet like any other player, but they cannot use their hands.
- The direct recipient of a throw-in cannot be called offside.
- The thrower can't play the ball a second time before anyone else plays it.
- You cannot score a goal against either team directly from a throw-in.

The team defending a throw-in should know that it's an offense to jump about to impede or distract the thrower. In essence, the throw-in is just a "neutral" restart, not intended as to provide an immediate scoring opportunity, so the defenders should just get out of the way and let it happen. One possible exception to this is the "flip" throw-in, which is generally legal, assuming the thrower can meet the technical requirements of this law. All opponents must stand at least 2 yds from the touchline where the throw-in is to be taken.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – *If a U4 player performs a bad throw in, the referee will instruct the player of the error and permit the player to try again. If the infraction occurs again the possession of the ball is transferred to the opposing team for a throw in.*

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

U6 – *If a U6 player performs a bad throw in, the referee will instruct the player of the error and permit the player to try again. If the infraction occurs again the possession of the ball is transferred to the opposing team for a throw in.*

U8 – *If a U8 player performs a bad throw in, the referee will instruct the player of the error and permit the player to try again. If the infraction occurs again the possession of the ball is transferred to the opposing team for a throw in.*

U10 – *No change from what was stated above.*

U12 – *No change from what was stated above.*

U14 – *No change from what was stated above.*

Law 16 – The Goal Kick

A goal kick is the restart if the attackers kick the ball over your goal line without scoring. Usually, this means they took a shot and missed, but goal kicks can also apply when an apparent goal happens in a situation where you can't score -- such as scoring directly on an indirect free kick. The referee signals a goal kick by pointing to the goal.

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents. A goal kick is a direct free kick from within your own goal area. The ball must be stationary and is kicked any point within the goal area by a player of the defending team. Opponents must be outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again before it has been touched by another player, an indirect free kick is awarded; if the kicker commits a handball offense:

- A direct free kick is awarded.
- A penalty kick is awarded if the offence occurred inside the kicker's penalty area, unless the kicker was the goalkeeper, in which case an indirect free kick is awarded.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 – *The 5 foot goal area shall be used for the U4 goal kick. Players should give a minimum of 3 yards from the ball and let the team restart the game by bringing the ball into play.*

U6 – *The 5 foot goal area shall be used for the U6 goal kick. The ball must leave the penalty area (5 yard line) to place the ball back into play. If the ball is kicked and doesn't leave the area the kick shall be retaken. No player may touch the ball until the ball entirely leaves the penalty area. If a player does the goal kick shall be re-taken.*

U8 – *No change from what was stated above.*

U10 – *No change from what was stated above.*

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

U12 – *No change from what was stated above.*

U14 – *No change from what was stated above.*

Law 17 – The Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded if the ball goes over the goal line last touched by the defense. The referee's signal is to point to the corner with the arm. A corner kick is essentially like a direct free kick at the attacking corner -- from within the 1-yd arc at the corner flag (or on the line). As with a free kick the opponents must stay 10 yards away until the ball is played, and the ball is in play when it has been kicked (touched with a foot). Note there is no offside on a corner kick.

Procedure

- The ball must be placed in the corner area nearest to the point where the ball passed over the goal line.
- The ball must be stationary and is kicked by a player of the attacking team.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not need to leave the corner area.
- The corner flag post must not be moved by any player, coach, referee or spectator.
- Opponents must remain at least 10 yards from the corner arc until the ball is in play.

TYSA Rules Modifications:

U4 - *Encroachment is 3 yards from the corner arc.*

U6 - *Encroachment is 3 yards from the corner arc.*

U8 - *Encroachment is 5 yards from the corner arc.*

U10 - *Encroachment is 7 yards from the corner arc.*

U12 - *Encroachment is 8 yards from the corner arc.*

U14 - *FIFA Rules as stated above.*

An important issue with corner kicks is the jostling, pushing, holding, and obstruction that sometimes occur in front of the goal. Although players from both teams are entitled to station themselves wherever they want on the field, if the referee thinks that attackers surrounding the goalkeeper are not trying to play the ball but are instead trying to prevent the keeper from playing, he is likely to call a foul for impeding or holding. This is sometimes a close call, but many refs tend to favor the defenders. Something the defenders can do is station several players around the keeper who leave when the ball is kicked -- this denies the attackers this space, leaving it clear for the keeper.

Because of the amount of contact and contesting for position that is likely to occur, corner kicks can be important indicators of the referee's attitude to physical play. Take note. The goalkeeper has no special rights but is frequently given the benefit of the doubt.

TYSA Spring 2026

Summary of the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

Law 18 -- Spirit of the Game

- Part of the spirit of the game is competition, and the laws try to ensure the competition is fair, even if the players are poorly matched. The laws also have been designed to ensure a uniform approach from one game to another, and one region or league to another.
- To maintain fairness and a sense of justice, different infringements are dealt with in different ways. Infringements against fair play and the spirit of the laws are more difficult to assess and deal with than direct infringements of the laws themselves.
- An important criterion in the referee's judgment is intention. Some incidents that would be punished if intentional may properly go unpunished if inadvertent, accidental or incidental.
- Decisions of the referee should be accepted cheerfully and sportingly, in part because it is the spirit of the law that the referee's decision on matters of fact should be final.

Law 19 – Field Officers

Field Officers will be present at as many games as possible. They will be identified by wearing red shirts w/ camo sleeves with the title of Field Officer on the back of their shirt.

Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Evaluate/Monitor Referees live on game days
- Make sure referees have all necessary equipment on hand in the respective tote for the game
- Help/Assist referees with calls, questions and disputes
 - o Answer questions on game rules and address any game violations.
 - o FO's are only able to change calls that involve rule interpretations/disputes. They are not able to interject on judgement calls by the referee.
- Monitor behavior of players and coaches
- Referee games if needed
- Carry out disciplinary action to coaches and players if necessary... and also parents if they are interacting with referees, coaches or players in an unacceptable manner.
- Conduct mid-season continuous training sessions to all referees to aid in their development.