



EastSide Soccer Association

17 Laws of Soccer

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INTRODUCTION

Soccer has 17 laws or “rules” by which the game is played. Most of these laws are easy to understand. The laws are designed to make soccer fun, safe, and fair for all participants.

The object of soccer is for a player to get the ball into the other team’s goal by using any part of the body except the player’s hands and arms. The goalie is the only player allowed to touch the ball with the hands and arms and then only while he is located in his own penalty area.

A referee is in charge of the soccer game. A referee’s main objective should be the safety of the players. It is the referee’s responsibility to ensure that the game remains fun for everyone. This includes players, spectators and the officials.

You will undoubtedly question some of the officiating calls as you watch a soccer game. This is only natural. To be fair to the referee you should read and understand the 17 laws so that you have a good understanding of the rules of soccer. Try to keep in mind that everyone who is watching a game has a different perspective. As a spectator, you will most likely be rooting for one team or the other and this will influence how you view the game as you will likely have a family member (brother, sister, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter) playing on one of the teams. Also keep in mind that everyone will be viewing the game from a different angle. Try to give the referee the benefit of the doubt. They are much closer to the action than the spectators are. They should be trained in the laws and impartial to the game’s outcome. Please remember, the referees are *always right*, even when they are wrong.

The 17 laws described below are the basic laws of soccer accepted throughout the world. These laws are usually altered slightly so the game is more fun and beneficial for young players. ESSA has modified the rules to fit the needs of its young players as set forth by US and Indiana youth Soccer associations. If there is anything about these rules you do not understand, please consult your coach or ESSA league official.

LAW 1 -The Field of Play

For a basic layout of a soccer field, please see the last page. The size of the field will vary depending on the age of the players.

LAW 2 -The Ball

A regulation size soccer ball is a No. 5 ball. The U14/19 age group will use a size 5 ball, U9/10 and U11/12/13 will use a size 4 ball and U5, U6, U7/8, and tiny tykes will use a size 3 ball.

LAW 3 -Number of Players

There must be no more than 11 players on the field of play for either team. One player from each team must be designated as a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper must wear a different color shirt from his teammates.



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so that everyone can easily distinguish the goalie. The goalie can only use his hands inside the penalty area. The numbers of players on the field for each group will be as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • U14/19 | 11v11 (10 plus a goalie) |
| • U11/12/13 | 8v8 (7 plus a goalie) |
| • U9/10 | 7v7 (6 plus a goalie) |
| • U7/8 | 6v6 (5 plus a goalie) |
| • Tiny Tikes, U5, U6 | 4v4 (No goalies) |

Even Up rule

In the event that one team does not have enough players to meet the number of required players, teams may opt to use the even up rule which states that one team may give another team players so they may both play with a full team. The even up rule must be agreed upon by both teams and the referee.

Modifications

The referee has the authority to play smaller sided games and/or shorten the game duration due to weather conditions, number of players that show up or any other factor they feel makes it necessary.

LAW 4 - Player's Equipment

All players must wear the same colored jersey or shirts, soccer shorts (preferably black) and knee high soccer socks (preferably black, white or dark green). Shin guards must be worn by all players in order to play. This is for their safety. If your son/daughter will be wearing cleats, make sure they are soccer cleats. A soccer cleat does not have a cleat at the front edge of the shoe like a baseball cleat. The associates at Dick's sporting goods can show the correct footwear for soccer. Jerseys will be sold at the field in the storage barn while shoes, shin guards, shorts and socks can be purchased at places such as Dick's sporting Goods, Wal-Mart, Meijer, K-mart and Target.

LAW 5 -Referees

The referee enforces the 17 laws. There is one difference between soccer and most other sports played in America. In soccer, the referee may let play continue and not call a foul if he or she thinks that stopping play would give an advantage to the team committing the foul. This is called the "advantage clause". The referee should say "play on" when this occurs. The referee has the authority to remove players from the game and spectators from the sideline if he/she deems it necessary for the safety and integrity of the game. The referee is **ALWAYS RIGHT**, even when he is wrong. ESSA has a strict **NO HASSEL** policy in regards to referees.

LAW 6 –Assistant Referees

Two assistant referees (AR) may assist the referee in controlling the game. The AR's duty is to signal to the referee when the ball is out; to indicate a corner kick, a goal kick or to designate which team is



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entitled to a throw-in. The AR may also signal offsides, fouls or misconduct if a goal has been scored or when substitution is desired.

The referee on the field makes the official and final decisions. The AR's are there to assist the referee; the referee may or may not act upon their advice. Coaches should not expect to have AR's at all games.

LAW 7 -Duration of the Game

The duration of the game will depend on the age of the children. Older children will have two halves while younger children will play four quarters. Duration will be as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| • U14/19 | Two 45 minute halves |
| • U11/12/13 | Two 35 minute halves |
| • U9/10 | Two 25 minute halves |
| • U7/8 | Four 8 minute quarters |
| • Tiny Tikes, U5, U6 | Four 6 minute quarters |

LAW 8 -Start of Play: Kick Off and Drop Ball

A kick off is taken to start a game, to restart play after a goal has been scored or to start the second half or a new quarter. At kickoff all players must be on their team's half of the field. The ball is placed on the center spot in the middle of the center circle. The ball must be kicked forward at least one full rotation into the opponents' "half of the field." The team that kicks off to begin the game is determined by a coin toss between the captains and the referee. After a goal the team that was just scored upon starts the kick off. For new quarters and halves, the team, which did not kick off the previous quarter or half will kick off. A goal cannot be scored by kicking the ball directly into the goal on a kick off.

A drop ball is played when the referee stops play for a reason other than a rule infraction. An injury is a good example. The referee restarts play by dropping the ball between two players, one from each team. A dropped ball may not be played until it touches the ground. The first player playing the ball is allowed to play the ball again without it having to be touched by another player. This means the player may dribble, pass or shoot the ball after touching it.

Two-Touch Rule in a Nut Shell

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. It applies everywhere. You will see it 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. The only exception to this rule is on a drop ball restart.



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LAW 9 -Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play whenever it is completely outside the outside edge of the touchline or the goal line either on the ground or in the air. Also it is out of play when the referee stops play for any reason. The ball is in play if any part of the ball is inside or touching the touchline or goal line. The ball is considered in play after bouncing off of a goal post, cross bar, corner flag, linesmen or referee if the ball remains on the playing field.

LAW 10 -Method of Scoring

A goal can only be scored if the entire ball goes completely over the outside edge of the goal line, under the cross bar and between the goal posts while it is in play. Any player may score goals, including the goalie. Except when taking a free kick, throw-in, goal kick, penalty kick or kick off, a ball played by a player directly into his own goal is a score for the opposing team.

LAW 11 -Offside

An offensive player must have two opponents including the goalkeeper between himself and the goal line at the moment the ball is passed to him. Offside is determined when the ball is passed to the player, not when the player receives the ball.

Offside position and offside are not the same. It is not against the rules to be in an offside position. It is against the rules to be offside. Here is a definition of these two concepts.

Offside Position -A player is in the offside position if he is: ahead of the ball, in the opponents half of the field and there are fewer than two opponents even with or ahead of him.

Offside -A player who is in the offside position becomes offside when: offside position applies and he participates in the play, or he interferes with an opponent or otherwise tries to take advantage of being in the offside position.

Exceptions - A player in an offside position is not to be called offside if he receives the ball directly from a throw-in, a corner kick or a goal kick.

ESSA will only use the offside rule for the U11/12/13 and U14/19 age groups. However, using offsides as a strategy (also known as “cheery picking”) is strongly discouraged in the younger age groups.

LAW 12 -Fouls and Misconduct

There are two kinds of fouls in soccer:

1. Penal or Major Fouls.
2. Non-Penal or Minor Fouls.



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There are nine penal or major fouls. These fouls must be committed intentionally and may result in a Red Card". The fouls are as follows:

1. Kicking a player.
2. Jumping up at a player.
3. Charging a player in a rough way.
4. Charging a player from behind.
5. Tripping a player.
6. Hitting or spitting at a player.
7. Pushing a player.
8. Holding a player.
9. Handling the ball. (Except by a goalkeeper). This foul is called if the player is trying to control the ball with his hands or arms. Put another way, 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 an advantage.

If one of these nine penalty fouls is committed and the referee blows his whistle and calls a foul, the opposing team gets a direct free kick. A "direct" kick means the opponent can try to score a goal directly from the kick. If the player committing the major foul receives a "red card" from the referee, he must leave the game, and is not allowed to return.

There are eight non-penal or minor fouls. If a player commits a minor foul he may receive a "Yellow Card" from the referee. The eight minor fouls are:

1. Dangerous play. Examples of a dangerous play are: high kicking near another player's head or trying to play a ball held by a goalie.
2. Fair charging, but with the ball out of playing distance.
3. Illegal obstruction. When a player intentionally takes a position between the ball and an opponent, when not within playing distance of the ball.
4. Charging the goalkeeper in the goal area.
5. Goalkeeper Infringements.
6. Goalkeeper taking more than four steps while controlling the ball.
7. Goalkeeper playing the ball with his hands when the ball is kicked by a teammate.
8. Intentionally wasting time.

The three Goalkeeper Infringement fouls will not be called in young children's games. When the referee stops play by blowing his whistle for a minor foul, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick. A goal cannot be scored directly from an indirect free kick. The ball must be played by a player other than the one taking the indirect kick, before a legal goal can be scored.



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Misconduct - There are two kinds of misconduct:

1. When an action results in a caution or a “yellow card” from the referee. A referee may warn a player to improve his conduct before a caution is issued.
2. When an action results in a player being ejected from the game, a “red card”. The referee has the authority to “red card” coaches or spectators because of misconduct or interference of the game. When a player receives a red, they must leave the game and his/her team must play a player short. If a coach or spectator receives a red card, they must leave the ESSA fields until the conclusion of the game (this means they must be outside the ESSA fenced area, but may wait in the parking lot). In the event that a player, spectator or coach gets too unruly, ESSA has a security guard on duty during all recreational game times to handle the situation.

LAW 13 -Free Kick

There are two types of free kicks: Direct and Indirect. The types of fouls that result in a free kick are described in LAW 12.

Direct Free Kick:

On a direct free kick, the ball may be kicked directly into the goal for a score by the player taking the kick. The direct free kick is taken at the spot where the foul occurred, unless it is within the penalty box. Then a penalty kick is awarded.

Indirect Free Kick:

A goal can be scored only if the ball is touched by one or more players from either team, after it is kicked into play and before it enters the goal. There are a few rules that are followed on a free kick, they are:

- The referee will signal an indirect free kick by putting one arm straight up into the air.
- The ball must be stationary when it is kicked.
- The team taking a free kick is entitled to have all opponents at least 10 yards from the ball when the free kick is taken.
- The kicker may kick the ball if the opponents are closer than 10 yards if he wishes.
- The kicker may ask the referee to move the opponents back 10 yards from the ball. The kicker must then wait until the referee blows his whistle before taking the free kick.
- If a free kick is taken within 10 yards of the opponent’s goal, opposing players may stand on their own goal line between the goal posts.
- A free kick by the defending team within its own goal area may be taken from any point within the half of the goal area in which the free kick was awarded.
- An indirect free kick by the attacking team within the defending team’s goal area is taken on the six yard line at the point nearest to where the foul was committed. (The six yard line is the line that outlines the goal area)
- The player taking the free kick must not play the ball again after it has been kicked into play until another player, from either team, has touched the ball.



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LAW 14 -Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded when a defender commits a penal or major foul within the penalty area. The team that was fouled is given a penalty kick from the penalty mark. All players except the goalkeeper must remain outside the penalty area and penalty arc until the kick is taken. The defending goalkeeper must stand on the goal line, between the goal posts and is not allowed to move until the ball is kicked. If the goalkeeper moves and the penalty shot does not score, then the penalty kick is retaken. Encroachment is when a player enters the penalty area or penalty arc before the ball is kicked. If a defender encroaches, then a scoring shot counts, a non-scoring shot is retaken. If an attacker encroaches, a scoring shot is disallowed and the kick is retaken. If the shot was non-scoring then the defending team gets an indirect free kick or a goal kick depending on where the ball is when the referee blows his whistle. If both teams encroach, the penalty kick is retaken whether it was a scoring shot or not. The penalty kick must go forward and cannot be played again by the kicker until another player has touched the ball.

LAW 15 -Throw-in

A throw-in is taken to restart a game after the ball goes out of play over the touchline. A throw-in is taken by a player from the team, which did not touch the ball last. The player throwing the ball in must have both feet on the ground and both hands on the ball over his head. Both feet must remain on or behind the touchline. The thrower must throw the ball with equal strength from both hands from the back of the head and over the top of the head. The thrower must not play the ball again until another player from either team has touched the ball. A player cannot score a goal directly from a throw-in. A player in the offside position receiving the ball directly from a throw-in is not offside. The player may take up to 3 steps prior to the throw of the ball and dragging a foot on the ground is acceptable in the U9/10, U11/12/13 and U14/19 age groups. Younger kids must throw the ball from a stationary position.

LAW 16- Goal Kick

The box located directly in front of the goal is called the goal area. When the attacking team last touches the ball before it crosses over the goal line, the defending team is awarded a goal kick. A goal kick is taken by any player on the defending team. The ball must be played from within the half of the goal area on the side of the field where the ball went out of play. The opposing team must remain outside of the penalty area until the ball completely leaves the goal area. The goal kick is played again if the ball does not leave the penalty area, if the ball crosses the goal line before leaving the penalty area or if the ball is played again by a player from either team before it leaves the penalty area. The kicker may not play the ball again until another player from either team touches the ball. A player in the offside position receiving the ball directly from a goal kick is not offside.

LAW 17- Corner Kick

If a ball goes over the goal line and is last touched by the defending team, the attacking team is awarded a corner kick. The corner kick is taken from within the corner arc on the side of the field where the ball went out of play. The corner kick may be taken by any player on the attacking team. The kicker is



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allowed to score a goal by kicking the ball directly into the goal. The opponents must be 10 yards back from the ball on a corner kick. The kicker is not allowed to play the ball again until a player from either team touches the ball. A player in the offside position receiving the ball directly from a corner kick is not offside.

LAW 18 -Common Sense (Unofficial Law)

Law 18" provides that common sense and the "Spirit of the Game" are always more important than the letter of the law. Referees refer to it as the most important of all the laws, because it overrides all the others. It's simply the application of common sense in interpreting and applying the Laws so as to ensure that a referee's decisions don't go against the spirit of the game. A basic difference between soccer and other sports is that the referee is a "judge" who interprets the "Laws of the Game" and applies them as needed to settle disputes between players and teams, not a policeman who applies every "Law of the Game" exactly as written to every single case where the law is violated. What this means in practice is that in the service of "Spirit of the Game", referees are frequently called on to temper their judgments with simple common sense. For example, if a referee blew his whistle every time an offence of any kind was committed, most games would be nothing more than a protracted and frustrating series of restarts. This occurs at all levels: very young players sometimes commit minor fouls inadvertently through clumsiness or lack of skill, and older players use gamesmanship to see how much they can get away with. All referees will let some offenses go: just how many they will allow before stopping play, and just how serious an offence it takes to stop play, is something players and coaches must learn to adjust to as early as possible in the game. Such situations arise more frequently than the casual spectator might think, and it is the hallmark of the best referees that they are able to maintain complete control of a match while allowing the players plenty of leeway to keep the game flowing. It is important to remember that a referee may not always make the right call, but the referee is always right.

DEFINITIONS

Caution – a disciplinary action in which the referee shows a player the yellow card (for violating a soccer rule, obviously). A second caution in the same match results in the player being shown the red card (ejected from the game).

Corner kick – a direct free kick that is awarded when the defending team puts the ball over the end line. A corner kick is taken by the offensive team from next to the corner flag.

Dangerous Play – an action by a player that the referee considers dangerous to that player or others. Examples are high kicking, playing while lying on the ground, or playing the ball while it is in the possession of the goalkeeper.

Direct Free Kick – a free kick that is awarded at the spot of the infraction for a physical contact foul such as tripping, holding, pushing, tackles from behind, jumping into an opponent, or for hand balls. A direct free kick can score by going directly into the goal. It does not have to be touched by anyone other than the kicker.



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Drop Ball – a method of restarting a game where the referee drops the ball between 2 players facing each other. A drop ball restarts the game after play is stopped for no penalty situation (e.g. after an injury) and in other circumstances (more than one soccer rule about this). The ball is dropped where it was last in play or at the nearest point outside the penalty area.

Foul – where the referee judges a violation against an opposing player. The team that suffers the foul is awarded with a direct free kick unless the foul is committed by a defensive player inside his own penalty area, in which case the foul results in a penalty kick.

Goal Kick – a type of restart that is awarded when the attacking team puts the ball over the end line. The ball is kicked from anywhere inside the goal area away from the goal to restart play. After the kick is taken, the ball cannot be touched again by any player until it is outside of the penalty area.
Indirect

Free Kick – a free kick that is awarded at the spot of the infraction for other fouls that are judged not to be serious such as obstruction, dangerous play or charging (non-contact fouls), as well as for offside. Indirect kicks must touch another player (either team) before the ball goes into the net in order to score.

Offside – a difficult soccer rule. Not good enough for you? Ok, ok. Here it is: a violation that occurs when an offensive player is closer to the opponent's goal than both the ball and the second-to-last opposing player at the time that the ball is passed to the offensive player by his or her teammate. Players cannot be called offside if they are in their own half of the field or if they receive the ball from a throw in, corner kick, or goal kick. When a player is called offside, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick.

Obstruction – a foul in which a defensive player, instead of going after the ball, illegally uses their body to prevent an offensive player from playing it.

Penalty kick – A kick taken from 12 yards in front of the goal as a result of a contact foul or hand ball that takes place inside the penalty area.

Red card – a referee shows a player a red card to signal that the player has been banned from the rest of the match. A red card can be shown for a single serious offense or as the result of being shown a second yellow card in the same game. After a player is shown a red card, the player must leave the field of play and cannot be replaced by a substitute, meaning that his or her team must finish the match with one player fewer.

Sending off – an ejection resulting from a player being shown a red card. See also Red card.

Throw-in – a way to restart play when the ball goes out over the sidelines. The team that did not touch the ball last is allowed an overhead throw.

Yellow card – a disciplinary action in which the referee shows a player the yellow card (for violating a soccer rule, obviously). A second yellow card in the same match results in the player being shown the red card (sending off).



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Weather and or field conditions

Obviously, ESSA has no control over the weather. We will make every attempt to play scheduled games on their allotted day and time. There will be times this is not possible. It is the responsibility of the parent to know the field status on game days. This may be found on the website at <http://essasoccer.net>. A green light means games will be played while a red light means games will not be played. All practices and / or games will be cancelled immediately upon seeing and/or hearing thunder or lightening.

Appendix I

ESSA Recreational Soccer Specifications by Age Group

Age Group	Game Length	Overtime Periods	Soccer Ball Specifications			Number of Players
			Ball Size	Ball Circumference	Ball Weight	
U14/U19	2 45 minute halves	2 15' halves	#5	27-28 in.	14-16 ozs.	11v11
U11/12/13	2 35 minute halves	2 10' halves	#4	25-26 in.	11-13 ozs.	8v8
U9/10	2 25 minute halves	NONE	#4	25-26 in.	11-13 ozs.	7v7
U7/8	4 -8 minute quarters	NONE	#3	23-24 in.	11-12 ozs.	6v6
U6	4 -6 minute quarters	NONE	#3	23-24 in.	11-12 ozs.	4v4
U5	4 -6 minute quarters	NONE	#3	23-24 in.	11-12 ozs.	4v4
Tiny Tykes	4 -6 minute quarters	NONE	#3	23-24 in.	11-12 ozs.	4v4



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EastSide Soccer Association Soccer Field Diagram

