

Soccer By-Laws Explanations:

Throw in – The ball must re-enter the field near where it left the field on a touch line. Two hands above the head, fluid motion both feet on the ground facing the field when the ball is released. The ball is in play when it breaks the plane of the goal line. The thrower cannot touch the ball again until it is touched by another player. If the ball does not break the plane, USSF allows a second attempt if in the opinion of the referee it was a legal throw. If it was not a legal throw, the ball is awarded to the opponent. There is not an established time limit for taking a throw-in (Law 15). Goalkeepers have 6 seconds to release the ball, but that ball does not apply to throw-ins. The goalkeeper is holding a live ball that cannot be challenged; however, the thrower is holding a dead ball. That does not mean the thrower can waste time, the referee has the option to caution the player for delaying a restart if he believes the thrower is wasting time. **I have heard spectators yell “5 second rule” when they feel the throw in is taking too long. That rule is a coaching tool and refers to the mathematical calculation for the optimal time for the throwing team to restart play with the highest percentage of retaining possession. It does not refer to the maximum time the throwing team has to restart play.

Kicks – A goal kick, corner, direct, indirect, penalty kick, and kickoff are all kicks that restart play. Goals can be scored from any free kick except an indirect free kick. The ball must be stationary when the kick is taken. The ball is not in play until it is kicked and clearly moves. After the ball clearly moves, the kicker cannot touch the ball again before it is touched by another person. It is called a double touch if it is touched by the kicker after the ball is put into play but before it is touched by another player. The restart is an indirect free kick for the opponent. If the player or other players touch or tap the ball, before it is kicked- that is ok because the ball is not in play until it moves therefore the second touch rule does not apply. Feigning or tapping the ball by multiple players before the free kick is taken - is a legal way to distract the opponents – except for penalty kicks. PK's must be made with a smooth motion by the identified kicker after the whistle.

For indirect free kicks- the ball cannot go directly into the goal until it is touched by a second player. This is where officials get the most grief. People know that IFK's need 2 people to touch it, and often they think that the order does not matter- but it does. The ball must be put into play with a kick before it gets the second touch by another player. The second touch does not have to be a teammate. Often goals are scored on IFK's because the kicker will take a shot on goal and the goalie will try to save the ball touching it and then it goes into the goal. IFK's that go directly into the goal without a second touch are restarted with a goal kick by the defending team. Watch the ref - the arm stays up until a second touch is made.

Attackers must clear the penalty area on all free kicks taken by defenders within the area. Recent law change now allows anyone (except kicker) to play the ball (2nd touch) prior to it leaving the area. Other defenders can stand right next to kicker and receive a pass then dribble it out. Attackers are allowed to re-enter the penalty area once the ball has been kicked and clearly moves.

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Respecting the distance - With exception to the IFK in the goal area (6yds)- **all kicks are to be given the respect of 10 yards (all directions)**. All kicks except a penalty kick can go in any direction which is why the opponents need to move away in all directions. Once a kick is awarded, the kicking team must make sure the ball is stationary but can kick immediately without waiting for a whistle. The laws of the game expect the opponents to back away from the ball once direction has been awarded to allow for the option of a quick restart by attackers. An opponent running up on the stationary ball to delay the quick restart can be issued a caution. If a kicker is setting up and feels the opponents are not respecting “the distance”, he may ask the official for 10. If that request is made, the player may not kick unless a whistle is blown. If the referee builds a wall, the players in the wall cannot move toward the ball until it is kicked and moves – again a reason you see the touches across the top by multiple players. For those that coach “man on” coverage, they need to be aware that “the 10” applies to corner kicks as well. ***For smaller fields the distance given is half the diameter of the center circle.***

Offside- A player cannot be offside on a throw-in, goal kick or corner kick. You can commit an offside offense from a direct free kick, indirect free kick, or a goalie punt. When the ball is played or touched by a teammate, the player in the offside position (standing closer to the goal line in his attacking half than the last two 2 opponents) will be penalized if he becomes involved in the play. He commits the offense if he plays the ball, interferes with a defender playing the ball or gains an unfair advantage from being in that position (playing a deflection from a defender, goalie or goal posts). Offside does not have to do with where he is standing when he receives the ball, and his movement is not considered unless it appears he is going to collide with the goalie or is the only one making a play for the ball. Once the ball is played by a defender, he is no longer in danger of committing an offside infraction. He is allowed to challenge for the ball that is being played by the defender if he did not interfere with the initial play by the defender – this is a judgement call by the referee. A deflection off a defender or an uncontrolled save by the keeper does not constitute a defender playing the ball. The ball is placed for an IFK restart where the referee determined the attacker became involved in the play.

Handballs - US soccer does not penalize people for having a hand or arm. This is a section that the referee’s opinion is what makes the call. Basic rule of thumb is that if they are not intentionally using their hands/arms to play the ball or make themselves bigger – it is considered accidental and not called. Accidental contact with arms in an unnatural position, however, can be called - the kid who sticks arms over the head to chest the ball-misjudges it and the ball strikes the arm - can be called. In the US, we also allow reflex protection of the face, groin and chest contact with the ball – it only applies to balls that are kicked from a close proximity and there is no other way to avoid it hitting the player. If the ball is played legally by a body part but takes a weird bounce and hits part of the arm- we are not to call it - even if the arm is extended. That arm must move to control the ball for the infraction. If a player intentionally goes to the ground, the ball hitting the supporting arm is not handball however the ball striking the other outstretched arm is considered a foul. Those are law changes within 4 years.