

COMMONLY MISUNDERSTOOD SOCCER RULES

PASSBACK TO THE GOALIE

The intention of the Law for passback to the goalie is for wasting time. It is not meant for all situations where a ball is handled by goalie after a teammate kicks the ball.

In the Opinion of the Referee. Everything you read below is part of the referees decision process. Yet none of the following points are absolute! As the teammate makes the pass the referee will look at the position of the teammate, his body language, direction of pass, position of goalie, position of other teammates and possibly the strength of kick.

Kicking the ball may be a pass. A pass is when a player directs a kicked ball to a teammate. When the player is passing to the goalie in the penalty area the goalie cannot pick up or handle the ball. Usually passbacks occur from outside the penalty to goalie. Most times, it is clear from the situation that it is a passback.

Kicking the ball may be to clear the ball out of danger. An example: The ball is near the goal. A defender winds up and kicks the ball and clears it 30 yards away. Well that was the plan. If she misstrikes the ball and the ball is now rolling towards the goal the goalie should be able pick up the ball. The defender wasn't passing the ball.

Trapping the ball with a foot is not a pass. A corner kick flies in. The near post defender traps the ball with his foot and the ball is on the ground. The goalie should be able to pick up the ball. The defender wasn't passing the ball.

A misplayed pass from teammate A to teammate B. If, in the opinion of the referee, that Andy was passing to Brian, Brian failed to control the pass, and the ball comes to the goalie he should be able pick up the ball.

Striking the ball with knee, thigh, shin, chest or head. The goalie should be able to touch the ball. A pass, for the purposes of this Law is narrowly defined to be contact with the shoe.

The Not so Clear Times. A pass within the penalty area: The shorter distances can make it harder to know who the pass was intended to. Multiple teammates near where the pass is intended also will make the decision more difficult.

Notice this article uses "should be able to pick up." The enforcement of the Law as intended is not perfect and each referee will apply the Law differently.

Finally, a coaching point! If the ball is dangerously close to the goal, your goalie is not sure if the backpass rule will apply if she picks up the ball, and kicking the ball away doesn't look like the best solution then teach your goalie to grab the ball. If the goalie is whistled for handling a passback the restart is an indirect kick. **There can never, ever, ever be a penalty kick for the goalie improperly handling a ball in his penalty area.** Of course, an indirect kick close to the goal itself is an entertaining event and a goal may or may not happen on the restart. Yet an indirect restart is better than letting a own goal roll in simply because the goalie is not sure who touched the ball last and was that touch a pass or there was a miscommunication between players.

GIVING THE WALL TIME TO SET UP

First, there is nothing written in Laws about "the wall." The team that committed the foul has no right to set up a wall. In fact, the defending team is required to quickly retreat 10 yards from the ball immediately after the whistle blows. Furthermore the defending team, at the edge of 10 yards or within the 10 yards, cannot move towards the ball until it has been kicked.

The attacking team may choose to immediately restart after the referee places (or indicates the placement) the ball. If the defense is milling around or trying to form a wall then so be it. If the attacker quickly takes the restart from 20 yards and drills it in the back of the net then it is a goal and a smart play. However, if the attacker immediately restarts before all the defenders retreat 10 yards and the attacker kicks the ball to a retreating defender 5 yards away then it is a present for the defenders.

The second point to discuss occurs when the offense is not restarting quickly, allows the wall to form, and the wall is not 10 yards away. If the offense **requests** the referee to enforce the 10 yards the offense must wait for the referee's whistle before kicking the ball. Again the defense, along the 10 yard perimeter, must wait for the ball to be kicked/touched before moving forward toward the ball. These players cannot move forward on the whistle.

PLAYING THE BALL ON THE GROUND

Players **can** kick the ball when they are on sitting or lying on the ground. This misconception comes from how Referees (and in the case of U8 here in Merrimack, Coaches on the field) call *Playing In a Dangerous Manner* (PIADM) at the younger ages.

When officiating the younger ages Referees tend to be quicker about blowing the whistle when a player falls to the ground, the ball is very close, and there are other players close by (already kicking the ball, within a short step and kick). The safety of the child on the ground is paramount. We don't want a child to be kicked. Certainly, many younger children don't recognize the danger of a player on the ground and will want to kick the ball.

Over time, what gets remembered is "kid on ground he can't play the ball" so blow the whistle. The PIADM Law does not change as the children get older. However, PIADM does tend to occur less often. A very dangerous situation is if one player falls as another player is kicking the ball. Even if the referee is fast on the whistle the falling player may get kicked. Finally, the restart for all PIADM fouls is an indirect kick to the opposing team. The child that fell "created" the dangerous situation.

HANDBALL

That phrase is heard every weekend at every game. Why didn't the referee blow the whistle? After reading this we hope you will have an understanding of Law about hand and ball contact. This answer is lengthy for something that appears so simple but please take the time to read. Some examples are provided but by no means is this an exhaustive discussion!

The referees hope, after reading this, that the cries from the sidelines will become "the ball touched his arm. Deliberate ref. Deliberate." Contact between the hand/arm and the ball is not an automatic foul. In fact, most of the handballs that occur during a match are not fouls and must not be called

or whistled as a foul. Furthermore there is no handball foul in the Laws of the Game. The foul is named **Deliberate Handling of the Ball** (abbreviated **DHB**).

From Laws of the Game - Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalie within his own penalty area)

From Laws of the Game - Guidelines for Referees - Law 12

Handling the ball involves a deliberate act of a player making contact with the ball with his hand or arm. The referee shall take the following into consideration:

- *The movement of the hand towards the ball (not the ball towards the hand)*
- *The distance between the opponent and the ball (unexpected ball)*

There are many points to consider when looking at DHB:

In the Opinion of the Referee. Everything you read below is part of the referees decision process. Yet none of the following points are absolute! A referee will look at ball starting point, trajectory, speed, body positioning, eyes, and arm movements to decide, **in the opinion of the referee**, if the contact between ball and hand is deliberate and must be called as a foul. The actions of the player can be subtle or outrageous, intentional or accidental.

Deliberate requires knowing. A player must know the ball is approaching. For example: A player begins a run downfield, her arms pumping. Her teammate, from behind, kicks the ball and it hits her in the arm and drops to her feet where she plays it forward. Since the player was looking downfield and the ball came from behind there is no DHB call. The ball landing at her feet is a fortunate happenstance.

Deliberate can be intentional. A player sees the ball, raises his arm and contacts the ball. Or the end player in a wall leans, moves her elbow out as the kick passes and touches the ball.

Deliberate doesn't have to be intentional. A player is trying to chest trap the ball and his arm touches the ball. This is almost always DHB. You may not like this call on the sideline but it is correct.

Proximity must be considered. Two players kick the ball at the same time. The ball goes straight up and hits either player in the arm. In this situation there probably will not be a DHB foul.

Consider another situation. Two opposing players race towards the goal line. The attacker squares up and kicks a crossing pass. The defender, right next to him, stops hard and the ball hits the defenders arm and falls to her feet. DHB? Maybe. Did the defender's arm stay in "natural" soccer position? Or did the defender move her arm just a little bit as the ball approached?

Reflexive protection of head is ok. A hard kick, made at close range, that is blasted towards a player's head. If the player reflexively swats at the ball DHB must not be called. The reflex actions to protect other body areas during dynamic play are not given the same absolute consideration.

Deliberate can be passive. If a long kick is made and touches a player's arm and the player made no attempt to avoid the ball then the referee can whistle DHB.

Age level should be considered. At younger ages the players may not understand or recognize the situation as quickly. Therefore they move their hands to protect themselves. One example is a high

lofting kick. The player may stand her ground and at the last moment put up her arms and bat at the ball. Many times the ball would not have touched the child at all. Is this reflexive? Yes. Should DHB be whistled? Now we are entering into the question of the age and experience of the referee. Some will whistle, some will not.

Static Protection in a Wall. Players may place their arms to protect their bodies when in a wall. Any ball kicked into the wall *when the player has not moved the arm towards the ball as it approaches* should not be called for DHB. Reflexive protection of the head is also expected in this situation. However, moving the arm while protecting does require the referee to consider DHB.

Other points know:

Unlike other fouls DHB doesn't require an opponent to be involved. An opponent, teammate, or even the player themselves can kick the ball, then deliberately handle the ball and receive a DHB whistle.

What happens after ball and hand contact is irrelevant. The opinion of the referee only considers the contact of the ball with the hand. What happens afterwards isn't considered. The referee doesn't consider if the handling player "gained an advantage" with the contact.

Denying a goal. Stopping a goal from scoring by DHB is a bad, bad thing to do. The referee has no choice but to send off the player (red card).

Girls may not use their arms to protect their chests during a chest trap.

Goalkeepers can never be called for DHB when in their penalty area. Either they are legally defending the goal or they have committed a foul (picking a ball passed to them from a teammate). Any handling foul on the goalie in her area is an indirect free kick given to the opponents. There is never a penalty kick. Of course, when a goalie has leaves her penalty area the goalie is subject to the usual Laws on DHB. Leaving her penalty area simply means the goalie is a field player wearing a cool shirt.

UNDERSTANDING OFFSIDE

Despite being one of the shortest of the 17 Laws of football, the offside rule, Law 11, is probably the most misunderstood rule in football. It is also one that raises much controversy owing to the subjective element of the referee's call. And yet, FIFA reassures us that it is actually one of the easiest rules to understand.[1]

Whether you're always getting called for being offside, or you're a spectator without a clue as to what offside violations are all about, this article explains how to understand the rule.

Note that the term 'offsides' refers to American football; in soccer parlance it is called 'offside'.

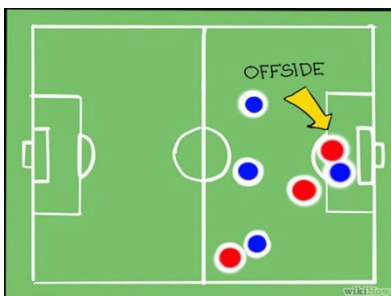
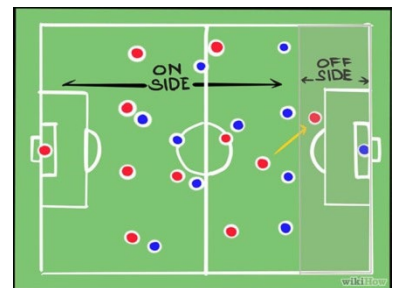
Steps

1 Learn a little history behind the offside rule. The offside rule originated in soccer's early days, in secondary school games; it was introduced to stop lazier players from simply hanging about the goal zone, waiting to take the ball and aim for an easy goal.[2] Under the rules of Eton College (1847), being offside was once known as "sneaking".[3] Over time, the offside rule has evolved to ensure a good balance of play (at one stage it was so tough that no goals were being scored!); by 1925 FIFA amended the rule so that only two players had to be between the attacker and the goal.[4] In 1990, the rule was amended to help the game flow more freely again, through permitting an attacking player to be level with the second-to-last defending player without being called offside.[5]

2 Understand what offside means. The reasoning behind the offside rule remains fairly much the same as when it was introduced, namely, it is aimed at preventing an attacking player from waiting for the ball close to the goal.[6] In simple terms, being offside occurs when an attacking player goes behind the line of defenders before the ball has been kicked to them. In greater detail, being offside occurs when:

The attacking player is in the opponent's half of the field

The attacking player is closer to the goal line than the last two opponent players (including the goalie) and the ball.



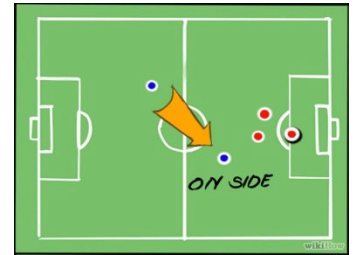
The attacking player is involved in the play, either by playing the ball or interfering with a defender or goalkeeper

When an offside infraction is called, play is stopped and an indirect free kick (the ball must touch another player before a goal is scored) is awarded to the opposing team.

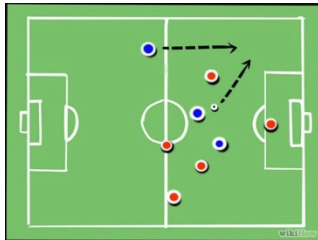
3 Work out whether the attacking player is actually in an offside position.

Here is how to determine the offside position:

Keep an eye on the closest two defenders to the goal including the goalkeeper.

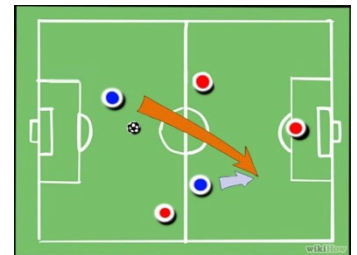


If there are fewer than two defenders (including the goalkeeper) between the attacking player and the goal, and the attacking player does not have possession of the ball, then the attacking player is in an offside position.

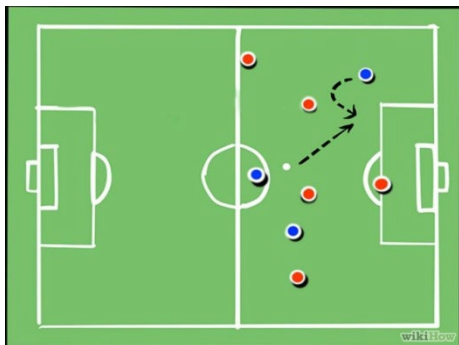


If the attacking player is in an offside position when a teammate plays the ball, then the offside infraction should be called when the player touches the ball or prevents an opponent from touching the ball.

Note, however, that it isn't enough for a player to be in the "offside position" for it to be declared offside. The key element is "interfering with play", which is defined as touching the ball or preventing an opponent from touching the ball.



Since the sole criteria for being in an offside position is the moment of play (the contact of the pass), players may freely move into an offside position AFTER that contact WITHOUT being considered (or called) offside. Conversely, a player in the offside position on a pass, is STILL offside (and will be called) if that player moves back into an onside position to receive the pass. It's as if the onside/offside position "freezes" upon contact of a pass. Because of this, attacking players may sprint past the defenders as soon as the ball is played (even though the ball has not arrived yet). This can cause them to be "open" (not defended) when they receive the pass, and yet not be offside.



4 Understand what the referee does. The Assistant Referee (AR) is in the position of calling an offside infraction. When the offside player interferes with play, the AR will raise his flag to signal an offense. The assistant referee will raise his flag straight in the air to indicate there has been an offside infraction. The referee will make the call to stop play, or he can overrule the assistant referee.

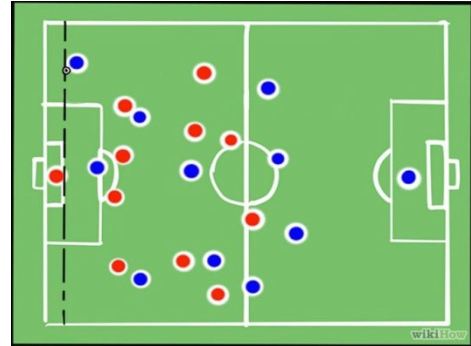
If the referee decides to blow the whistle and stop play, the assistant referee will then lower his flag 45° (for a player on the far side of the field), 90° (for a player in the middle of the field), or 135° (for a player on the near side of the field), depending on which player is offside. The referee will indicate an indirect free kick is awarded to the opponent team by holding one arm in the air (before and after the restart) until the ball has touched another player on the pitch.

5 Know when a player is not offside. When the ball is between a player and the goal, then the attacking player cannot be offside. Thus, the player can dribble the ball past the last defender.

A player cannot be offside on the defending half of the field. The furthest point that you must retreat to avoid an offside call is the halfway line.

- A player cannot be offside directly from a throw-in.
- A player cannot be offside directly from a corner-kick.
- A player cannot be offside directly from a goal-kick.

The latter three points are easy to remember if you equate them with the ball leaving the field of play. The above three points are the restarts for the ball leaving play and therefore there is no offside on the following restart.



6 Note when offside ceases to apply. Offside only applies at the time that the ball was last touched by an attacking player, not after the touch. Once a teammate passes a ball to the attacking player, the attacker can legally sprint past the last defender to receive the pass.