AYSO REFEREE GUIDELINE

Fundamental Information for All Referees

American Youth Soccer Organization

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Version History

REVISION	DESCRIPTION
6/12/2021	Integrated the AYSO Addendum to LOTG, updated dates
6/8/2022	Terminology updated to be consistent with LOTG
6/27/2023	Added NRR guidance on hair beads, and medical devices, added advice on pre-existing field conditions, and corrected typos. Updated Referee signals.
10/25/2023	Address allowance of medical implanted devices and not allowing permanent jewelry on players
5/7/2024	Add U10 misconduct guidance, captain armbands, special anniversary badges, PDI circumvention guidance
5/20/2025	2025 LOTG updates, Youth Green Badges, Referee Uniform exceptions, Font alignment
8/28/2025	Updated Q&A regarding treatment of severe injuries on the field
11/12/2025	Clarification on wrist braces with hard inserts
6/6/2026	2026 Update, Added FAQ on youth instructor/mentor
8/8/2026	2026 Update, Applied current National Rules & Regulations, e.g.14U to U14, Updated FAQs
9/28/2026	Updated FAQ to address video recording of play by referee

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WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!

The American Youth Soccer Organization and National Referee Council welcome volunteers to the world of youth soccer Refereeing.

AYSO is a place where every child plays in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship, and positive Coaching. In addition to the game's technical, tactical, and physical components, the organization recognizes, and prioritizes the psychosocial needs of the child, and works toward the fulfillment of those needs in all AYSO programs. Staying truly child-centric makes AYSO a model for youth sports groups and is key in its position as a player development leader.

AYSO's child-centric philosophies make participation in youth soccer a wonderful experience for players, Coaches, and Referees. This Referee Guideline has been designed to acquaint our Referees with the necessary tools, regulations, philosophies, and guidelines for success. AYSO's objective is to have our Referees, and volunteers enjoy a safe, fair, and fun game alongside the players.

AYSO Referee courses and local Referee orientations are key to success as a Referee. A Regional Commissioner or a Regional Referee Administrator are primary points of contact to ensure you continue to have current information, mentoring, and support as you officiate in AYSO.

On behalf of the entire organization, thank you for being a part of the team!

AYSO

Founded in Torrance, California in 1964, AYSO is a distinguished cornerstone of US Soccer, and, with approximately 60,000 teams across all age groups, AYSO is the world's biggest soccer club!

Success can be measured in many ways, from the careers of professional players who got their start playing AYSO to the thousands of Referees (youth, high school, collegiate, and professional) who developed their passion and understanding of the game in AYSO. Regardless of perspective, our contribution to the U.S. game's success is founded upon our unique Vision, Mission, and Six Philosophies.

AYSO VISION

To provide world-class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives.

AYSO MISSION

To develop, and deliver quality youth soccer programs in a fun, family environment based on AYSO's six philosophies.

AYSO'S SIX PHILOSOPHIES

EVERYONE PLAYS®

Our goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.

BALANCED TEAMS

Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible— because it is fair, and more fun when teams of equal ability play.

OPEN REGISTRATION

Our program is open to all children who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.

POSITIVE COACHING

Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled, and better-motivated players.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

We strive to create a safe, fair, fun, and positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

We believe that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills, and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually, and as members of a team, to maximize their enjoyment of the game.

STEWARDS OF THE GAME

Stewardship from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary*:*

> *"The conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful, and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care"*

APPLICATION ON THE FIELD

Referees and Coaches are to be Stewards of the Game and work together to ensure that player safety, at the physical, and emotional level, is the number one priority on the field. At each game, all Referees, and all Coaches are equal participants and are there for the sole purpose of ensuring a safe, and protective environment for the players. The Referee shall initiate a brief meeting between the Referee, Assistant Referees, and Coaches before the AYSO match to collectively:

- Identify any potential issues that may impact the ability of players to safely have fun, such as the field, sideline areas, field equipment, players' equipment, the physical, and emotional states of participants, and other game-related concerns.
- Review, and follow a simple process that encourages communication, and collaboration when there is a concern or issue with players/participants.

REFEREES

Referees, as Stewards of the Game, are responsible for keeping the game safe, fair, and fun. Referees should support, and work with Coaches to manage the behavior of players, and spectators.

COACHES

Coaches, as Stewards of the Game, must keep their sideline participation to being: Positive, Instructive, and Encouraging at all times. Coaches must ensure respect, and support for Referees by players, parents, and all other spectators.

PARENTS

Parents are expected to respect Coaches, and Referees, model positive sporting behavior, and, at the same time, maintain realistic expectations.

KIDS ZONE

KEEP IT FRIENDLY

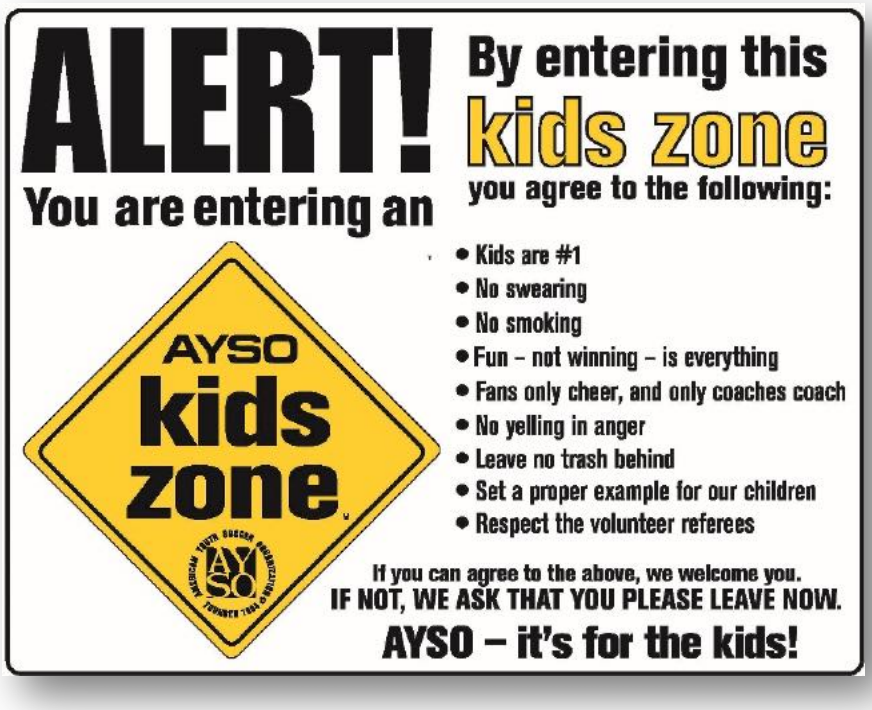
Fans in AYSO (including parents) are asked to be cheerleaders, not critics or sideline coaches. Kids Zone is a unique program that asks parents to sign a Parent Pledge committing to positive and encouraging behavior.

Soccer is a player's game. Players learn the game by trying new things, making mistakes, and trying again.

Negative, and even violent behavior from players, Coaches, and parents involved in youth sports has become an epidemic in our country. Kids Zone is a proactive effort to counteract this trend.

To help promote this program, a large sideline poster listing positive behavior standards (available at the AYSO Store) can be posted at the entrance of participating fields. Parents and spectators who will abide by these standards are welcome.

More information about Kids Zone can be found at aysovolunteers.org/the-kids-zone-pledge.



COACHING METHODOLOGY

WHY REFEREES NEED TO KNOW COACHING METHODOLOGY

Referees and Coaches are teachers of the game, and both are empowered to enrich the lives of youths by guiding them through the game of soccer.

The information within the Coaching Methodology and Age-Appropriate Player Development sections will help the Referee understand key objectives for the AYSO Coaching guidelines, and for setting up a safe, fair and fun environment; an environment that allows youths to play and develop a love for the game as it enhances core family values.

DEVELOPMENT OVER WINNING

While the technical aspect of a match is to win, how a victory is acquired becomes a question of development versus winning.

Does player development take place when a player punts the ball 30 yards to a teammate who is on their way to a goal? It doesn't. Yet, this is how many teams of all ages win matches and measure their success. AYSO philosophies challenge that methodology on the quest for victory.

Prioritizing development over winning does not reduce competition, which is instrumental to a player's development. However, a competitive environment does not necessarily need to be entirely based on winning or losing.

Make players better by encouraging them to play with purpose, intent, creativity, and skill. Then, give them quality instruction to develop their skills, the freedom to express themselves, and make mistakes, and the platform to improve by playing. Echoing the famous Dutch soccer player, and coach Johan Cruyff: "Ironically, if the club does improve each player, the team results improve." Referees and Coaches need to work together as a team to ensure a safe, healthy, and competitive environment for the players.

AGE-APPROPRIATE UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

The Referee should strive to understand and monitor the behavior of young players to guide them toward safe, fair play and having fun. The ability to identify a player's frustration is critical for the Referee to team up with the Coaches as needed to provide a fun environment for the players. Knowing what to expect from young players' behavior will help the Referee better anticipate negative instances, and therefore help the players remain positive.

AGE-APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTICS	
U6	U6 is a time for freedom and EXPLORATION! Let them Play! Training should be based on fun games, adventures, storytelling, and colorful landscapes. Talk in their term and language. Animate! Paint vivid pictures! Demonstrate! Keep sessions moving or boredom will quickly creep in.
U7	Fundamental motor skills (balance, walking, running, jumping, etc.) should be highlighted, and combined with ball control. Players must maximize their contact with the ball, and most activities should be individual (ball per player). Players need to develop ball familiarity, and PLAY! Players at this age are egocentric, and for the first time have to build relationships with other players. Give different responsibilities to players to develop a sense of team (cone helpers, break captains, time goalkeepers, etc.).
U8	Let any tactical insight be developed through small-sided matches and activities. U8 is a time for DISCOVERY! Let them Play! Prioritize FUN and INSPIRE your players!
U10	9-12 years is the golden age for learning, and the perfect age to increase focus on specific techniques, and skills. It is the time for ADVENTURE! Physically, ages 9-10 are still in the early stages of development. Pre-pubescent players (9-12) are responsive to role models, friendships, and peer approval. Players enjoy the team concept but will participate enthusiastically in competitive arenas, so 1v1, and 2v1 situations are perfect to develop individual skills. Passing techniques/activities will help develop their team concept.
U12	Players have an increased understanding of strategy, and tactics so small-sided matches can help develop basic attacking and defensive principles. Players should still rotate positions to avoid early specialization (as well as participate in other activities/sports). Physical literacy (balancing, agility, speed, coordination, etc.) improves. U12 is the time for "polishing" the player's technical skills

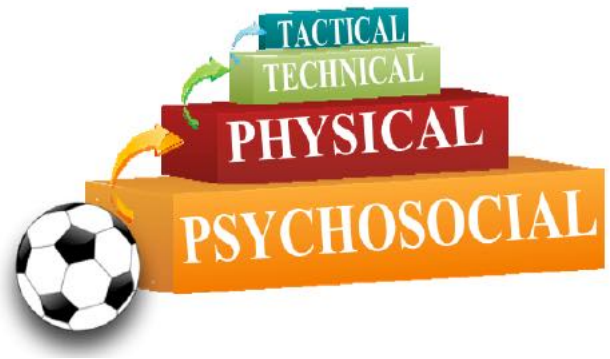
AGE-APPROPRIATE (PLAYER) DEVELOPMENT

THE SCIENCE OF AGE-APPROPRIATE TRAINING

AYSO Vision Statement:

"To provide world-class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives."

This vision can only be achieved if we continually ask ourselves if the activity, method, or decision will truly enrich the player's life. To achieve this goal, our training sessions must be adapted to the player's specific age and stage of development.



Technical, tactical, physical and psychosocial training components should be woven throughout each session; however, at all-times with deep respect to the player's specific age and stage of development.

At AYSO, we prioritize these important aspects as follows:

Psychosocial

Respect, motivation, confidence, cooperation, competitiveness, etc., and how these emotions and feelings impact a player's development. Also, it includes a player's ability to reason, learn and solve problems. **In AYSO, we develop the whole person!**

Physical

A player's physical attributes: speed, agility, endurance, strength, power, etc. **In AYSO, we promote a healthy lifestyle through soccer!**

Technical

A player's ability to master ball skills, *e.g., ball control, shooting, passing*. **In AYSO, we prioritize skill development and ball mastery.**

Tactical

A player's capacity to use their skill and ability within a game environment, *e.g., creating space in midfield, possession, and transition, creating width*. **In AYSO, we educate our players on playing as part of (and within) a team dynamic.**

Referees should strive to understand the different player skill levels within the areas listed above. Understanding and embracing these concepts allows the Referee to keep players physically and emotionally safe. Teaming up with the Coach to support the best environment for the youths playing soccer, and others, provides the Referee with great satisfaction and a significant sense of involvement in enriching children's lives.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

AYSO wants to develop players with more individual skill, intelligence, creativity and confidence. Players should be having fun and feel free to make their own decisions. To this end, AYSO has implemented the USSF Player Development Initiatives for younger players in situations including heading the ball, throw-ins, goalkeeper punts and use of the build-out line.

HEADING THE BALL (U14 and UNDER)

- Heading is banned for all division players U11, and below (U12, and below for programs without single-age divisions) in both practices and matches.
- Heading for players in U14 is limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per week with no more than 15-20 headers per player. There is no restriction on heading in matches.
- An indirect free kick will be awarded to the opposing team if a player in the above-stated divisions deliberately touches the ball with their head during a match. The indirect free kick is to be taken from the place where the player touched the ball with their head with the following exceptions:
    a. An indirect free kick awarded to the attacking team inside the opposing team's goal area must be taken on the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the player touched the ball with their head.
    b. An indirect free kick awarded to the defending team in their goal area may be taken from anywhere in that area.
- Neither cautions nor send-offs shall be issued for persistent offenses or denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity related to the heading infractions.

THROW-INS (U6 and U8)

- For U6, the throw-in is replaced with the pass-in or dribble-in. Opposing players must be at least two yards from the ball until it is kicked.
- For U8, each Region shall have the discretion to use either throw-ins, pass-ins or dribble-ins to restart play.
- Training in throw-in technique may begin at U8 and up.

GOALKEEPER PUNTS (U9 and U10)

- For U9, and U10, the goalkeeper shall not punt, nor drop kick the ball.
- An indirect kick will be awarded to the opposing team at the spot of the offense if a goalkeeper for U9 or U10 deliberately punts the ball during a match, except that an indirect free kick awarded to the attacking team inside the opposing team's goal area must be taken on the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the goalkeeper punted the ball.

BUILD-OUT LINE (U9 and U10)

- The build-out line shall be placed across the field equidistant between the top of the penalty area and the halfway line.

- The opposing team must move behind the build-out line for a goal kick or when the goalkeeper has possession.
- The player taking the goal kick does not have to wait for opposing players to move behind the build-out line to put the ball into play. The goal kick may be played to either side of the build-out line. The ball is in play after the ball is kicked and clearly moves, after which the opposing team may cross the build-out line. If an opponent crosses the build-out line before the ball is in play, and interferes with the goal kick, the kick is retaken.
- The goalkeeper in possession of the ball in their hands does not have to wait for the opposing players to move behind the build-out line to release the ball. The ball may be released to either side of the build-out line, after which the opposing team may cross the build-out line. If an opponent crosses the build-out line before the ball is released, and interferes with play, an indirect free kick is awarded to the goal goalkeeper's team at the point where the opponent crossed the build-out line.
- The build-out line in the opponent's half of the field shall be used as the line to determine offside. Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and that build-out line.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Soccer is designed to be a player's sport, and the involvement of non-players, such as Coaches and Referees, is intended to be limited. This can be a new concept for many individuals who are accustomed to Coaches and officials who are actively and visibly involved in other popular sports.

Coaches who participate in these other sports direct the action of the players, debate rule decisions with officials, and stop the action by consistently calling time-outs. Officials in these other sports participate by stopping the match for each rule violation and do not continue play until the infraction and violator have been identified, the punishment options have been explained to the opposing team, and a final accounting of the entire incident has been announced or signaled to the spectators. It is not uncommon in these sports for a considerable amount of time to be devoted to these matters, compared to the actual time allowed for players to play the game.

The Spirit of the Game promotes the match as a tool to enrich players' lives in a safe, fair and fun environment. The role of AYSO Coaches and Referees is to facilitate a match that will provide the maximum enjoyment for the players in this safe environment. Understanding the Spirit of the Game and the philosophy of officiating can significantly contribute toward the fulfillment and enjoyment of the game for all involved — players, Coaches, Referees and spectators.

APPLICATION

The application of the Spirit of the Game in youth soccer is far more important than a strict application of the Letter of the Law (see IFAB Laws of the Game). Soccer is a fast-paced sport that should flow with minimal interruptions. Referees have considerable flexibility when determining whether or not to stop play. Violation of the letter of the Law may be overlooked if

the Referee deems it to be a trifling or doubtful offense. The Referee may also decide not to stop play when it could be more advantageous for the team that was fouled to continue play.

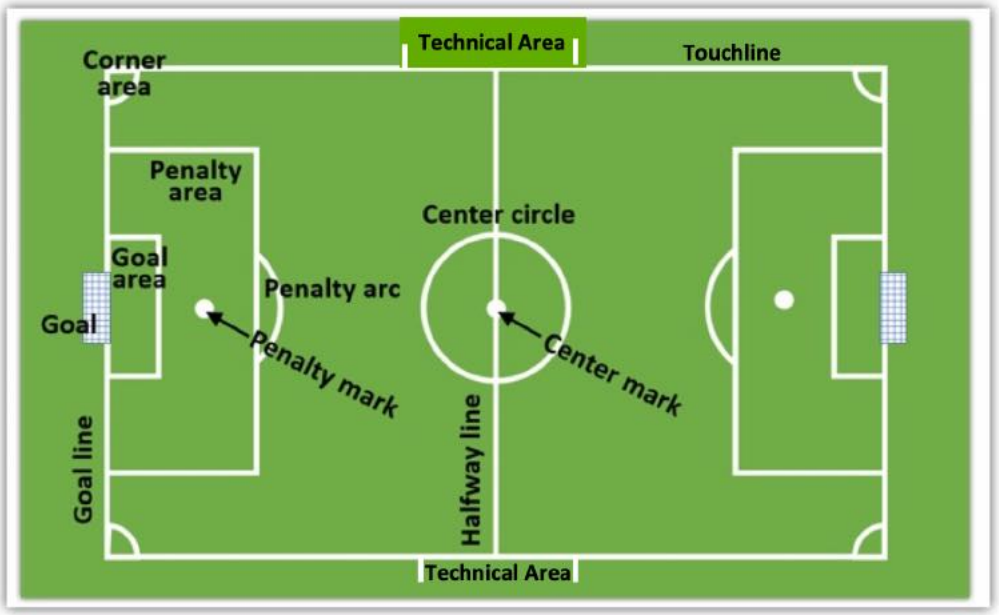
Standards implemented during international, college or high school competitions are not necessarily appropriate for all levels of youth soccer.

Just as players strive for excellence in match skills, and Coaches strive to develop successful players and teams; Referees should strive to instill a sense of fairness and good sportsmanship through the fair and consistent application of the Laws of the Game.

SIMPLIFIED LAWS OF THE GAME

INTRODUCTION

AYSO matches shall be conducted per the current International Football Association Board (IFAB) Laws of the Game, and decisions of IFAB in effect on July 1st of each calendar year, and the US Soccer Player Development Initiatives, with exceptions, and clarifications as fully explained in the AYSO National Rules & Regulations. What follows is a simplified explanation of the Laws, policies and procedures used in AYSO.



LAW 1: THE FIELD OF PLAY

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The field of play must be safe for players, and the goals and markings must be adequate for the Referee to perform duties and be clear to players.

MEASUREMENTS

Measurements of various aspects of a field are found in the Appendix.

SPECIAL ASPECTS OF THE FIELD OF PLAY IN AYSO

A team technical area extending ten yards on each side of the halfway line shall be marked by two lines off the field of play and perpendicular to the touchline. The area shall be as long as the diameter of the center circle. Where possible, the coaches' technical area shall include two additional lines, with one line parallel to and at least one yard from the touch line, and a second parallel line no more than three yards from the touchline.

The field shall be marked, where possible, with a spectator control line parallel to the touch line at a distance of at least three yards from the touch line. Coaches and officials should help the assistant referees keep spectators behind the spectator control line.

Spectators shall not be allowed behind the goal lines, except for photographers who have received authorization from the referee, and who shall remain quiet and sufficiently back from the goal lines.

CHECKING THE SOCCER FIELD TO ENSURE SAFETY

The dimensions and markings of the field of play, and goals shall be at the discretion of the Region, and whenever possible, conform to the IFAB Laws of the Game for U13 and older or to AYSO/US Soccer Player Development Initiatives small-sided match requirements as documented in the AYSO National Rules & Regulations.

The Referee team should check the field to make sure it is safe for the players and spectators. After checking the field, the Referee should notify the appropriate official to correct all safety issues before starting the game. If there are field issues that are not critical enough to stop the game from starting, discuss the issues with everyone to help manage possible safety concerns.

Things to check for include:

- Holes in the ground that may cause players to injure their ankles, and/or feet.
- Glass, sharp objects and any other items that may cause injury to players.
- Make sure that the goals and nets are properly secured.
- When available, corner flags or cones should be properly placed.
- The field markings should be clear and correct.

DEALING WITH APPURTENANCES TO THE FIELD

Pre-existing conditions include trees overhanging the field, wires running above the field and covers on sprinkler or drain systems. They do not affect one team more adversely than the other and are considered to be a part of the field. If the ball leaves the field after contact with any item considered under the local ground rules of the field to be a pre-existing condition, the restart is per the Laws of the Game.

LAW 2: THE BALL

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The ball must be safe for the players and of appropriate size and weight.

CORRECT SIZE, AND WEIGHT OF THE BALL

Ball sizes and weights for the different age divisions are found in the Appendix.

LAW 3: THE PLAYERS

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Each team is entitled to begin play with a maximum of 11 players (including a designated captain) and shall not continue play with fewer than 7 players. In AYSO, exceptions to this minimum number are permitted for small-sided matches as noted in the Appendix.

All eligible team members in attendance must play at least half of the game, excluding overtime, except players arriving during the second or third "quarters" who must play a minimum of one "quarter".

AYSO substitution opportunities are approximately midway in the first half, half-time, approximately midway in the second half, the start of any overtime periods and anytime for an injury. When substituting for an injured player, only the injured player is credited with a "quarter" of play.

In Divisions where monitored substitution is permitted, every player must still play at least half of the game, excluding overtime. To replace a player with a substitute, the following must be observed:

- A coach may request a substitution at any stoppage in play (AR will indicate the request to the Referee)
- The Referee must be informed before any substitution is made
- The player being substituted:
    a. Receives the referee's permission to leave the field of play, unless already off the field, and must leave by the nearest point on the boundary line unless the referee indicates that the player may leave directly, and immediately at the halfway line or another point (e.g., for safety/security or injury)
- The substitute only enters:
    a. During a stoppage in play
    b. At the halfway line
    c. After the player being replaced has left
    d. After receiving a signal from the referee

The substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play; from that moment the replaced player becomes a substituted player, and the substitute becomes a player and can take any restart.

Team Captain: Each team must have a designated captain on the field but is not required to be wearing an identifying armband.

LAW 4: THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The players of each team must be safely equipped and easily distinguished from the opposing team.

BASIC PLAYER UNIFORM

The Referee team should make sure that the players have the proper equipment.

THINGS TO CHECK FOR INCLUDE:

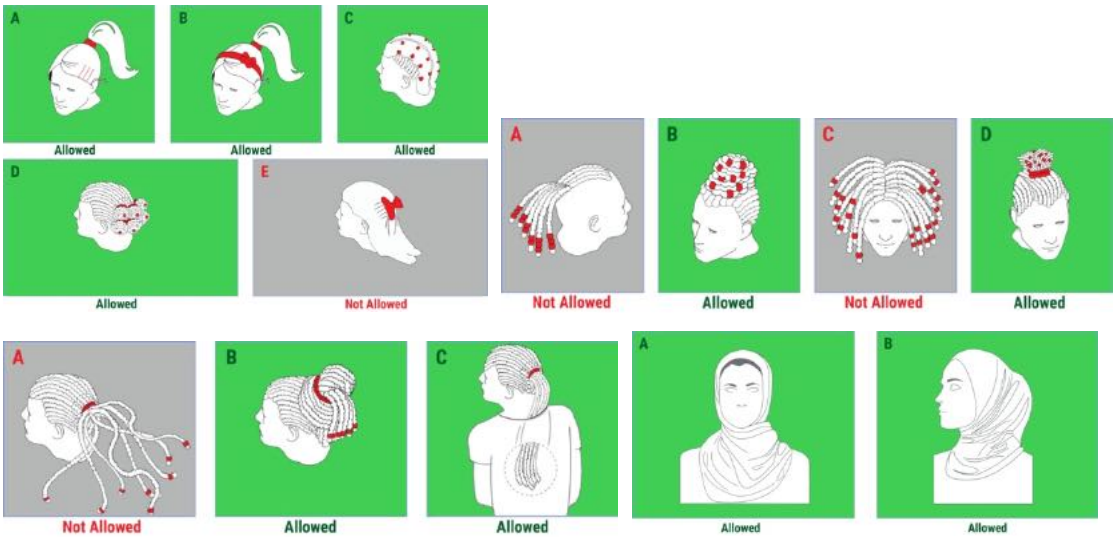
- Every player should have the basic equipment which consists of a shirt, shorts, socks, shin guards and shoes.
- Shinguards are required in all practices and games. Players must wear shinguards that provide a reasonable degree of protection and that are completely covered by their socks to participate in any practice or match.
- Rolled-up or tied-up sleeves are permitted, provided that the Referee approves that it is done safely.
- The goalkeeper's shirt must be of a different color than all other players on the field and match officials.
- Ensure that a player is designated as the captain on the field of play but is not required to be wearing a Captain's armband.

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

The Referee is responsible for deciding the safety of the players' equipment.

- Casts or splints, jewelry, watches and other articles of adornment are not allowed.
- Players shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any match with any type of cast or splint. Removal of any type of cast or splint at the field or the surrounding area to participate shall disqualify the team member from practice or match participation.
- Necklaces, bracelets, earrings, visible piercings and watches will still be considered dangerous – must be removed and not taped or covered.

- Players may not wear anything that could endanger either themselves or another player. All items of jewelry – Removable and welded (necklaces, rings, bracelets, friendship bracelets, watches, earrings, ear gauges, rubber bands, body piercings, decorative hair adornments, etc.) are forbidden and must be removed before a player is allowed to participate. Using tape to cover jewelry is not permitted.
- Team members must wear shinguards that provide a reasonable degree of protection, and that are completely covered by their socks, to participate in any practice or match. Though the Laws of the Game impose responsibility for the size and suitability of shinguards upon the players, the referee will remain responsible for determining the safety of each player's equipment. The lone exception is sanctioned beach futsal soccer tournament play where players may opt out of wearing shinguards.
- The use of soft and safe material for hair or sweat control will be allowed at the referee's discretion.
- Hair Beads, and Clips: Hair control devices, and other adornments, such as beads, worn in the hair must meet the following criteria: - Be securely fastened to the head. - Do not present an increased risk to the player, teammates or opponents. - Flat clips less than two inches in length may be used to hold the hair in place close to the head so long as their placement on the head does not present an increased risk to the player, teammates or opponents. - Hair charms are still considered jewelry and are not permitted. (See diagrams below for examples)



- Medical alert bracelets are allowed, and this information must remain visible. However, to ensure the bracelet does not present a danger to the player or other players, it must be secured to the player with tape, a cloth wristband or something equivalent taking care to leave the information visible. If a medical device is needed to restrict mobility, protect an injury or support proper alignment to expedite the healing process of a temporary injury, and is hard (cast, splint, wrist brace with hard inserts, etc.) then it is not allowed. If, on the other hand, the protective device is used to provide support and flexibility or enable an otherwise healthy player to function normally such as a knee brace, prosthesis, hearing aid, insulin pump/monitor, monitoring device, concussion impact reduction aids such soft header helmets and collars that are age and size appropriate, etc., then this would be allowed provided the device was sufficiently padded to prevent injury to the wearer and other players.

The Referee makes the final decision on what is safe to wear during the game.

THE ROLES OF THE REFEREE, AND ASSISTANT REFEREE

Soccer like many other sports generates passion, and sometimes it comes with behavior challenges. The environment for the players has to remain safe and fair at all times so the Referee and Assistant Referees use the IFAB Laws of the Game to manage the game. This section will explain the responsibilities of the Referee team, explain opportunities to develop relationships with the Coaches throughout the game and provide simple techniques to help Referees move, position themselves on the field of play to be close to the players and have a good angle of view. Movement on the field of play and the ability to see things will help the Referee influence player behavior and make correct decisions related to stopping and restarting the game.

LAW 5: THE REFEREE

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The Referee must ensure the match is safe (physically, and emotionally), fair and fun for the players. This concept is expressed by the following quote from the AYSO National Rules & Regulations:

> *"The Laws of the Game are intended to provide that games should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of the Referees to penalize only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling, and doubtful breaches produces bad feelings, and loss of temper on the part of the players, and spoils the pleasure of the spectators."*

The Referee has responsibility for the following basic duties:

- Act as timekeeper and keep a record of the match.
- Keep track of the game score as required by the game level.
- Manage substitutions with the help of the Assistant Referees.
- Complete and submit a game report.
- Stop play when a player is or may be injured.
- Restart the play when it has been stopped.

The Referee should pay attention to help identify players that may be experiencing frustration, and/or possible injury. The Referee should communicate all concerns about players to their Coach.

Players who receive assessment/treatment on the fields will be required to leave the field of play, and if not substituted, may reenter once play is restarted with the referee's permission

Headsets, Electronic Communication Systems, and Electronic Beeper flags should not be used during assessments.

LAW 6: THE OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The Assistant Referee's job is to assist the Referee in officiating the match. The Assistant Referee should always assist, never insist.

REFEREE AND ASSISTANT REFEREE SIGNALS

Signals, approved by the IFAB, and universally in use, are illustrated in the Laws of the Game. Standardized flag signals are used to avoid confusion. Additional communication with the Referee is also made through frequent eye contact and by other accepted signals agreed upon during the Referee's pre-match instructions.

The Assistant Referees must follow the lead and instructions of the Referee. Their positions are determined by the position of the players, the position of the ball and instructions of the Referee, and they must be ready to adjust based on the constantly changing conditions during play. They are also expected to judge misconduct or fouls out of sight of the Referee, and when these activities occur, as instructed, to bring them to the attention of the Referee.

CLUB LINESPERSON

Club Linespersons are sometimes used when neutral Assistant Referees are not available. Club Linespersons are usually selected from volunteers present at the match and often are supporters of one of the clubs or teams playing in the match, thus the derivation of the name "Club Linespersons." Because of their lack of official training, Club Linespersons have very limited responsibilities.

To acquire the most effective cooperation from Club Linespersons, the following procedure shall be adopted:

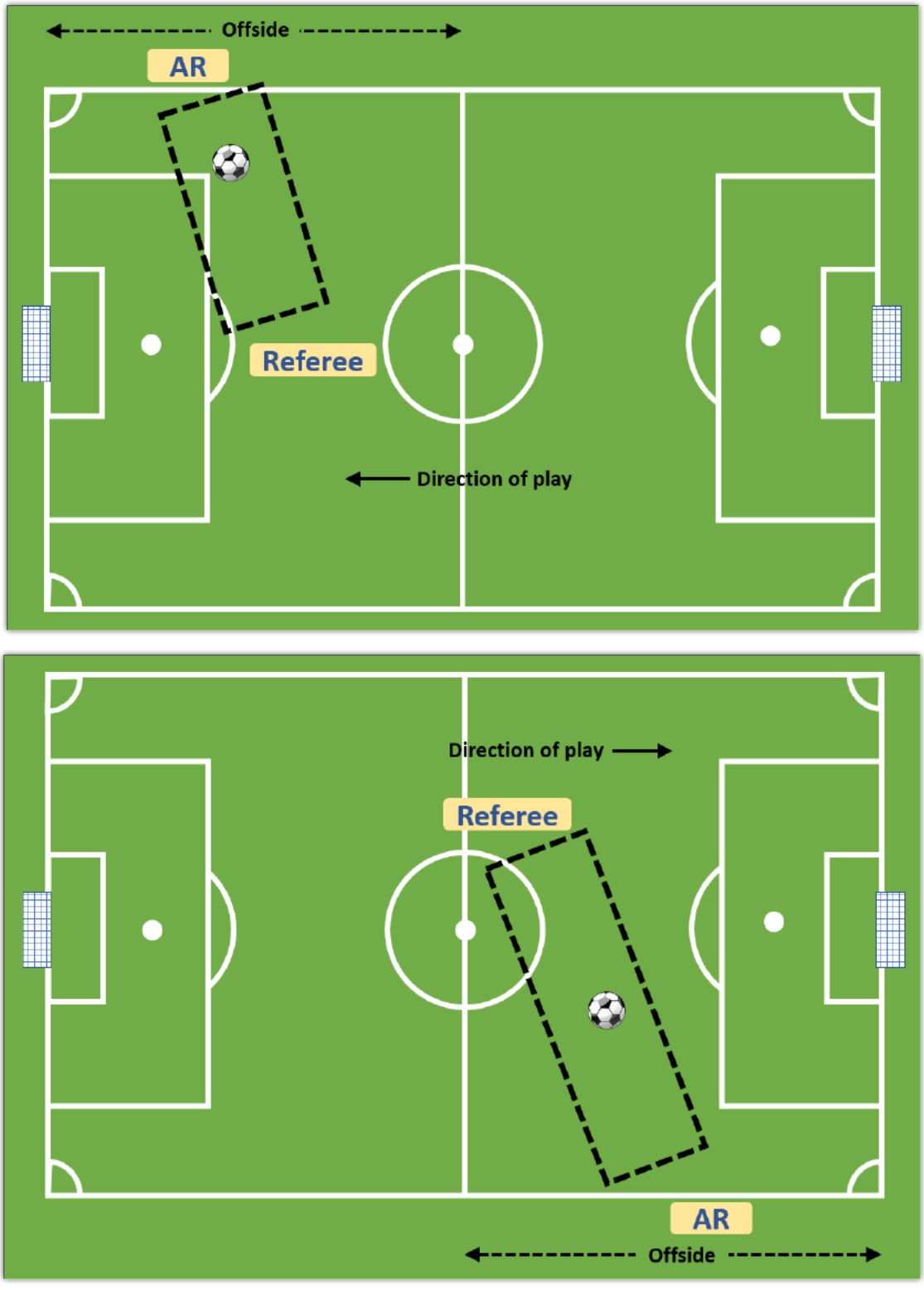
- The Club Linesperson shall report to the Referee before the start of the match for instructions. The Referee shall inform them that, regardless of their personal opinion, the Referee's decision is final and must not be questioned.
- Their work as Club Linesperson is to signal when the ball is entirely over the touchline or goal line subject always to the final decision of the Referee.

A quick demonstration of a ball completely off the field of play is usually beneficial to the Club Linesperson.

Note: If a certified referee is not in uniform, and is recruited as a Club Linesperson, he/she must only perform the duties assigned to a Club Linesperson to not create confusion for the player, coaches or spectators, or to show bias between Linespeople.

REFEREE TEAM MECHANICS

The Referee should always try to keep the play between themselves and the lead Assistant Referee. This is referred to as “Boxing Play”.



ASSISTANT REFEREE SIGNALS

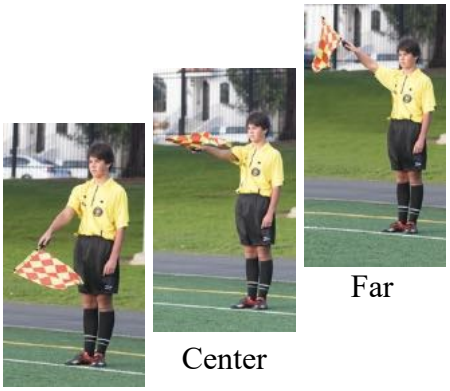
THROW-IN

Point direction team taking throw-in is attacking

OFFSIDE

Hold the flag straight up

OFFSIDE LOCATION



Near

GOAL KICK

Point toward the goal area

CORNER KICK

Point toward the near corner

SUBSTITUTION

Lower when the Referee acknowledges then move to the halfway line to control substitution

FOUL NOT SEEN BY REFEREE

Raise the flag in the hand that will indicate restart direction; after the Referee eye contact, slight wiggle; after the Referee stops play, indicate restart direction

REFEREE SIGNALS

FREE KICK

Point in restart direction; if IDFK, follow with IDFK signal

INDIRECT FREE KICK

Hold signal until another player touches, goes out of play or it is clear a goal cannot be scored directly

GOAL KICK

Point to the goal area with palm open

THROW-IN

Point direction team taking throw-in is attacking

CORNER KICK

Point to the corner where the kick is to be taken

MISCONDUCT

Send Off

Red Card

Caution

Yellow Card

ADVANTAGE

Shout “Advantage, Play On” (with one or both arms)

PENALTY KICK

Point downward toward the Penalty Spot

REFEREE, AND ASSISTANT REFEREE COMMUNICATIONS

When the ball goes out of play, the Assistant Referee should make eye contact with the Referee, and if needed, provide a signal that indicates the restart.

Throw-in – after making eye contact with the Referee, the Assistant Referee should use the throw-in signal to indicate the direction of the Throw-in.

Goal Kick – after making eye contact with the Referee, the Assistant Referee should use the goal kick signal to indicate that a goal kick should be awarded to the defending team.

Corner Kick – after making eye contact with the Referee, the Assistant Referee should use the corner kick signal to indicate that a corner kick should be awarded to the attacking team.

Offside – the Assistant Referee should raise the flag straight up, then after making eye contact with the Referee, the Assistant Referee should indicate the location of the restart for the offside offense. The Referee should then indicate Indirect Free Kick until another player touches the ball, the ball goes out of play, or it is clear a goal cannot be scored directly.

Mistakes Will Be Made…, and It Is OK!

A good process for ensuring correct decisions includes the following steps.

- The Referee should take an extra couple of seconds to indicate and/or signal a stoppage of play and a restart. The extra time allows the official to think through and confirm the decision before it is signaled.
- The Assistant Referee should make eye contact with the Referee before signaling a restart. This will provide the opportunity for the Referee and Assistant Referee to share information. For example, the Referee may help indicate the direction of a throw-in with a subtle signal which the Assistant Referee can follow up with the flag signal.

There will be times when the Referee or Assistant Referee will make a wrong decision or provide the wrong signal. This is okay as mistakes are part of the game because it is a fast game with very little time to make decisions. Everyone makes mistakes, including the players, the Coaches and the Referees. If the Referee or Assistant Referee realizes that a mistake has been made, they can change their decision as long as the game has not been restarted.

A process for the Referee team to change a decision includes the following steps:

- If the Assistant Referee makes the wrong decision, raise the flag to get the Referee's attention.
- The Assistant Referee or the Referee should explain to the players that the wrong decision has been made.
- Indicate the right decision and provide the correct signal.
- To be fair to both teams, do not allow play to restart until players have gotten into position now that they know the corrected decision. For clarity, restart the play with a whistle.
- Forget about the wrong decision and concentrate on the rest of the game.

MANAGING THE GAME

LAW 7: THE DURATION OF THE MATCH

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The players are entitled to the entire designated playing time. Unless otherwise defined in local rules of competition, the duration of the match is specified in the Appendix.

Half-time periods shall be a minimum of five, and a maximum of ten minutes as designated by the Referee.

MANAGING PLAYING TIME:

- Set your time watch to track time, and, when all is ready, whistle for the kick-off to take place.
- Time starts when the ball has been put into play – that is, the ball is kicked and clearly moves.
- The match consists of two equal periods. If the kick-off is later than the scheduled time, the Referee may deduct equal time from each half to not delay the following game.
- Time may be added for excessive time lost due to time-wasting or unusual delays. In most AYSO matches, there is very little time between matches. Ensure the next match can start on time.
- The amount of time lost, if any, is determined by the Referee.

The Referee should encourage players to restart the game as quickly as possible to avoid wasting time.

LAW 8: THE START, AND RESTART OF PLAY

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Neither team shall have an unfair advantage at the start or restart of play.

There are times when the Referee has to stop the game and determine how to restart it based on rules that support fair Referee decisions. The Referee identifies offenses, who commits them, and the correct restart of the game. In Law 8, and several following Laws, simple and specific facts are specified as to how to restart the game and who gets possession of the ball for the restart. Simple techniques to help the Referee make correct decisions.

KICK-OFF

- The team that wins the coin toss decides which goal to attack in the first half or to take the kick-off.
- Depending on the above, their opponents take the kick-off or decide which goal to attack in the first half.
- The team that decided which goal to attack in the first half takes the kick-off to start the second half
- For the second half, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals.
- After a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by their opponents

Kick-Off Procedure

- The ball is stationary in the center of the field.
- All players, except the player taking the kick-off, must be in their half of the field.
- The opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 10 yds (outside the center circle) from the ball until it is in play.
- The Referee blows the whistle to start play.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.

DROPPED BALL

A dropped ball is used to restart the game when the Referee stops play for an unusual but neutral reason, such as an injury, dog on the field or stray ball on the field, or if play is stopped because the ball touched a match official under the conditions stated in Law 9.

Dropped ball procedure

- If when play was stopped:
    - the ball was inside the penalty area the referee drops it for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area
    - the ball was outside the penalty area, the referee drops it for one player of the team that would have retained or gained possession (including from the restart if the ball would have gone out of play) if this can be determined by the referee, otherwise, it is dropped for one player of the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped, unless it hit a match official or outside agent, in which case it is dropped at the position of the interference/contact.
- All other players (of both teams) must remain at least 4.5 yards from the ball until it is in play
- The ball is in play when it touches the ground
- The ball is dropped again if it:
    - touches a player before it touches the ground
    - leaves the field of play after it touches the ground without touching a player
- If a dropped ball enters the goal without touching at least two players, play is restarted with:
    - A goal kick if it enters the opponent's goal
    - A corner kick if it enters the team's goal

LAW 9: THE BALL IN, AND OUT OF PLAY

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The ball must pass wholly over the boundary line on the ground or in the air to be out of play.

SIMPLE DEFINITIONS OF BALL OUT OF PLAY

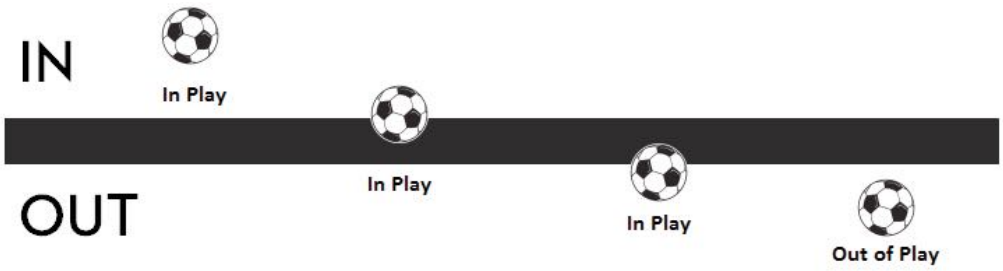
The ball is out of play when it completely leaves the field of play on the ground or in the air, including when a goal is scored.

The ball is also out of play when the Referee stops play:

- Because of outside influences such as a pet running onto the field or a young sibling running onto the field of play.
- When an injury happens.
- When an offense is committed.
- When time expires for either half.

The ball is also out of play when it touches a match official, remains on the field of play, and:

- A team starts a promising attack or
- The ball goes directly into the goal or (anytime the ball goes directly into the goal – The IFAB, Feb 10, 2024)



- The team in possession of the ball changes

The ball is in play at all other times when it touches a match official on the field of play, and when it rebounds off a goalpost, crossbar or corner flag post and remains on the field of play.

If without intending to interfere with play unfairly, a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or player who is temporarily off the field of play (injury, adjusting equipment, etc.) touches the ball while it is in play but when it is clearly leaving the field of play, this is penalized with an indirect free kick; there is no sanction.

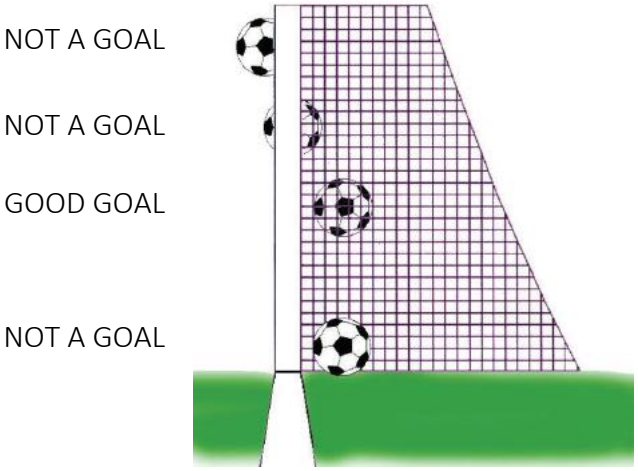
LAW 10: DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

The Referee will award a goal when the entire ball enters the goal except as otherwise provided by the Laws of the Game.

SIMPLE DEFINITION FOR A GOAL SCORED

A goal is scored when the ball completely goes over the goal line between the goalposts and under the cross bar.



OFFSIDE, FOULS, AND MISCONDUCT

Two concepts in soccer typically don't show up in games with younger players or simply, they don't apply to specific ages (U8, and below). This section will cover the basics of Law 11 Offside, Law 12 Fouls, and Misconduct, and explain which offenses are common in games with younger players, and how simple it is to manage them. In games with younger players, the Referee is more an extension of the Coaching program, and therefore, the focus is more on mentoring and guiding the players than applying Law 12.

LAW 11: OFFSIDE

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

A player may not participate or interfere with play from an offside position. The offside law is intended to ensure that players earn the right to shoot on goal fairly.

An offside offense has two requirements – (1) a player has to be in an offside position, and (2) the same player has to be involved in active play.

PLAYER IN AN OFFSIDE POSITION

- A player is in an offside position if the player is:
    1. in the opponents' half of the field;
    2. closer to the opponents' goal line than at least two opponents, and
    3. closer to the opponents' goal line than the ball.

- The player's offside position is judged at the moment the ball touches or is played by a teammate. The first point of contact of the "play" or "touch" of the ball should be used; however when the ball is thrown by the goalkeeper, the last point of contact should be used.
- A player may be in an offside position as long as the player does not participate in the play.

PLAYER INVOLVED IN ACTIVE PLAY

- A player may be involved in active play by:
    1. interfering with play or
    2. interfering with an opponent or
    3. gaining an advantage by being in an offside position.

NO OFFENSE

- There is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from:
    1. a goal kick
    2. a throw-in
    3. a corner kick

If an offside offense occurs, the Referee awards an indirect free kick where the involvement in active play occurred, including if it is in the player's defensive half of the field of play.

LAW 12: FOULS, AND MISCONDUCT

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Players or team officials that fail to play in a sporting, fair or safe manner will be penalized.

DIRECT FREE KICK

A direct free kick is awarded if a **player** commits any of the following offenses **against an opponent**, **when the ball is in play**, in a manner considered by the Referee to be ***careless, reckless, or using excessive force***:

- Charges
- Jumps at
- Kicks or attempts to kick
- Pushes
- Strikes or attempts to strike (including head-butt)
- Tackles or challenges
- Trips or attempts to trip

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offenses:

- A handball offense (except for the goalkeeper within their penalty area)

- Holds an opponent
- Impedes an opponent with contact
- Bites or spits at someone on team lists or a match official
- Throws an object at the ball, an opponent or match official, or makes contact with the ball with a held object

When one of these twelve offenses happens, a direct free kick is taken from the place where the offense occurred. If the offense is committed by a defender inside their penalty area, then a penalty kick is awarded to the attacking team.

INDIRECT FREE KICKS

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

- Touches the ball with the hand/arm after releasing it, and before it has touched another player
- Touches the ball with the hand/arm, unless the goalkeeper has clearly kicked or attempted to kick the ball to release it into play, after:
    - It has been deliberately kicked to the goalkeeper by a team-mate
    - Receiving it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate

An indirect free kick is awarded if a player:

- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of an opponent without any contact being made
- Is guilty of dissent, using offensive, insulting or abusive language, and/or gestures, or other verbal offenses
- Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from the hands or kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing it
- Initiates a deliberate trick for the ball to be passed (including from a free kick or goal kick) to the goalkeeper with the head, chest, knee, etc. to circumvent the Law, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball with the hands; the goalkeeper is penalized if responsible for initiating the deliberate trick
- Commits any other offense, not mentioned in the Laws, for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player

When one of these ten offenses happens, an indirect free kick is taken from the place where the offense occurred (see exceptions stated in Law 13 below).

Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their penalty area, controls the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than eight seconds before releasing it. A goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) when:

- The ball is between their hands/arms or between their hand(s)/arm(s) and any surface (e.g., ground, own body)
- Holding the ball in their outstretched open hand(s)
- Bouncing it on the ground or throwing it in the air

The referee will decide when the goalkeeper has control of the ball and the eight seconds begin and will visually count down the last five seconds with a raised hand.

A goalkeeper cannot be challenged by an opponent when in control of the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s).

MISCONDUCT

Player behavior that is in serious conflict with the Spirit of the Game, and Good Sportsmanship becomes a misconduct offense. Misconduct is rare in younger players' games, but if it occurs in the U9 or U10 game, cards should not be shown. The referee should approach the offending player's coach, explain the misconduct to the coach while showing the coach you are recording the misconduct on your match report. The misconduct should also be recorded on the back of the game card and a misconduct form completed as required by the competition authorities.

In U11 and U12 games, the display of a card is discouraged, and handling it through the Coach is preferable, but in rare cases, the display of the card may be appropriate.

Cautionable Offenses

A player is cautioned, and shown the yellow card if they are guilty of:

- Delaying the restart of play
- Dissent by word or action
- Entering, re-entering or deliberately leaving the field of play without the Referee's permission
- Failing to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a dropped ball, corner kick, free kick, or throw-in
- Persistent offenses (no specific number or pattern of offenses constitutes "persistent")
- Unsporting behavior
- Entering the Referee review area (RRA)
- Excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal

"If you are showing the card to a player because there has been a repeated offenses by a team to one player, the Yellow Card sanction would be for Persistent Offences. In these instances, it is recommended that the referee does a public warning before, to prevent this type of behavior. We recommend the same concept of management if one player is persistently offending." – Kari Seitz, US Soccer VP, Refereeing, February 10, 2025

Sending-Off Offenses

A player, substitute, or substituted player is sent off, and shown the red card if they commit any of the following offenses:

- Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing a deliberate handball offense (except a goalkeeper within their penalty area)
- Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing a non-deliberate handball offense outside their own penalty area
- Denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent whose overall movement is towards the offender's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick (unless as outlined below)
- Serious foul play
- Biting or spitting at someone
- Violent conduct
- Using offensive, abusive, or insulting language, and/or action(s)
- Receiving a second caution in the same match
- Entering the video operating room (VOR)

DOGSO

Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is cautioned if the offense was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball; in all other circumstances (e.g., holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball, etc.,), the offending player must be sent off.

Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing a deliberate handball offense, the player is sent off wherever the offence occurs (except a goalkeeper within their own penalty area). "Deliberate refers to touching the ball with their hand/arm, as a result of intentionally moving the hand/arm toward the ball or into the path of the ball" – The IFAB, June 9, 2024

Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing a non-deliberate handball offense and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is cautioned. "Non-deliberate refers to touching the ball with their hand/arm when it has made their body unnaturally bigger" – The IFAB, June 9, 2024

"Accidental refers to a non-intentional action such as scoring in the opponents' goal directly or immediately after the ball touched the hand/arm. This is a handball offense" – The IFAB, June 9, 2024

TEAM OFFICIALS

The following offenses should usually result in a warning; repeated or blatant offenses should result in a caution or sending off:

- Entering the field of play in a respectful/non-confrontational manner
- Failing to cooperate with the Referee or Assistant Referee
- Minor/low-level disagreement (by word or action) with a decision
- Occasionally leaving the technical area without committing another offense

Cautionable offenses for team officials include (but are not limited to):

- Clearly/persistently not respecting the confines of their technical area
- Delaying the restart of play by their team
- Deliberately entering the technical area of the opposing team (non-confrontational)
- Dissent by word or action including:
    - Throwing/kicking drink bottles or other objects
    - Action(s) which show a clear lack of respect for match official(s) e.g., sarcastic clapping
- Entering the referee review area (RRA)
- Excessively/persistently gesturing for a red or yellow card
- Excessively showing the "TV signal" for a VAR 'review'
- Acting in a provocative or inflammatory manner
- Persistent unacceptable behavior (including repeated warning offenses)
- Showing a lack of respect for the game

Sending-off offenses for team officials include (but are not limited to):

- Delaying the restart of play by the opposing team (e.g., holding onto the ball, kicking the ball away, obstructing the movement of a player)
- Deliberately leaving the technical area to:
    - Show dissent towards or remonstrate with, the Referee or Assistant Referee
    - Act in a provocative or inflammatory manner
- Enter the opposing technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner
- Deliberately throwing/kicking an object onto the field of play
- Entering the field of play to:
    - Confront the Referee or Assistant Referee (including at half-time, and full-time)

    - Interfere with play, an opposing player, or a match official
- Entering the video operation room (VOR)
- Physical or aggressive behavior toward anyone
- Receiving a second caution in the same match
- Using offensive, insulting or abusive language, and/or action(s)
- Violent conduct
- Using unauthorized electronic or communication equipment

When an offense is committed, and the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach present in the technical area will receive the sanction.

Referee Abuse Prevention

AYSO National Policies have been amended to adopt the US Soccer Policy 531-9 by incorporating the policy and penalties into AYSO's pertinent governing documents:

- Section E. Duties and Responsibilities of Coaches, Referees, Officials, Other Volunteers, Spectators, Team Members and Other Participants.
    - Prohibit and abstain from making negative comments and complaints about officiating. Any abuse, assault and/or gross misconduct directed at any match official will be disciplined in accordance with U.S. Soccer Policy 531-9 Misconduct Toward Game Officials in Amateur Matches, which policy is effective March 2025.
- Penalties/sanctions would range from a number or years to lifetime ban depending on the severity of the offense. Minor Referee multipliers are updated as of 15 May 2026.
- Offenses conducted against youth officials will be punished at 3x the penalty against an adult.

Continue to process the misconduct reports in the same manner as before:

- Misconduct reports for team members (players &coaches) and Incident reports for Spectators must include the following:
    - Match details, including but not limited to team information, age group, score and date
    - Detailed statement about the incident, including the specific details of the behavior or action (i.e., assault, abuse, mistreatment)
    - Specific language no matter how uncomfortable you may be writing it down.

The report should be delivered to the Regional Commissioner or Area Director, where the appropriate disciplinary actions will be determined.

Final sanctions should be reported to the Section Director and the National Referee Program Administrator.

More details and templates are available on the AYSO Wiki.

STARTING, AND RESTARTING THE GAME

LAW 13: FREE KICKS

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Free kicks are to be taken without interference from the opposing team.

TYPES OF FREE KICKS

A free kick is used to restart play when the game is stopped because of an offense. There are two types of free kicks – Direct Free Kicks and Indirect Free Kicks.

FREE KICK

Raise your arm in the direction of the kick.

If the kick is indirect, immediately follow this direction signal with the IDFK signal.

A goal can be scored directly from a DFK.

INDIRECT FREE KICK

After signaling direction for the free kick, raise, and hold your arm straight up until the kick has been taken, and the ball touches another player, goes out of play or it is clear that a goal cannot be scored directly.

The ball must be touched by any other player before a goal can be scored.

An indirect free kick must be retaken if the Referee fails to signal that the kick is indirect, and the ball is kicked directly into the goal.

BALL ENTERS THE GOAL

- If a direct free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal is awarded
- If an indirect free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded
- If a direct or indirect free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded

Procedure:

All free kicks are taken from the place where the offence occurred, except:

- Indirect free kicks to the attacking team for an offence inside the opponents' goal area are taken from the nearest point on the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line
- Free kicks to the defending team in their goal area may be placed anywhere in that area
- Free kicks for offenses involving a player entering, re-entering, or leaving the field of play without permission are taken from the position of the ball when play was stopped. However, if a player commits an offense off the field of play, play is restarted with a free kick taken on the boundary line nearest to where the offense occurred; for direct free kick offenses, a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender's penalty area

The ball:

- Must be stationary
- The kicker must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player
- Is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves

Until the ball is in play, all opponents must remain:

- At least 10 yds from the ball, unless they are on their goal line between the goalposts
- Outside the penalty area for free kicks inside the opponents' penalty area

Where three or more defending team players form a "wall', all attacking team players must remain at least 1 yard from the "wall" until the ball is in play.

LAW 14: THE PENALTY KICK

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Penalty kicks are given in U9 and older age group games. A penalty kick is awarded to the offended team when a defending player commits a direct free-kick offense within their penalty area.

PENALTY KICK PROCEDURE

- The ball must be stationary with part of the ball touching or overhanging the center of the penalty mark, and the goalposts, crossbar, and goal net must not be moving.
- The Assistant Referee positions at the intersection of the goal line, and the penalty area to judge whether the ball completely crosses over the goal line and whether the goalkeeper comes off the goal line before the kick is taken.

- The player taking the penalty kick must be identified.
- The defending goalkeeper must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must not behave in a way that unfairly distracts the kicker, e.g. delay the taking of the kick or touch the goalposts, crossbar, or goal net.
- All players other than the kicker, and the goalkeeper must be at least 9.15m (10 yards) from the penalty mark, behind the penalty mark, inside the field of play, and outside the penalty area until the ball is played.
- The Referee whistles for the penalty kick to be taken.
- The kicker must kick the ball forward; back heeling is permitted provided the ball moves forward.
- When the ball is kicked the defending goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind, the goal line.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- The kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it is touched by another player.
- The penalty kick is completed when the ball stops moving, goes out of play or the referee stops play for any offense
- If a penalty kick has to be taken or retaken, the duration of either half is extended until the penalty kick is completed (the ball stops moving, goes out of play, and is played by any player (including the kicker) other than the defending goalkeeper, or the referee stops play for an offence by the kicker or the kicker's team.
- An indirect free kick is awarded to the defending team if a penalty kick is kicked backwards; a teammate of the identified kicker takes the kick (caution the player who took the kick); or feinting to kick the ball once the kicker has completed the run-up (caution the kicker)
- If a team-mate or the goalkeeper offends, if the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded; if the ball does not enter the goal, only if the kicker was impacted, the penalty is retaken
- If a player taking the penalty kick or a team-mate offends, if the ball enters the goal and there was no impact to the defenders, it is a goal; if the ball enters the goal and there was an impact to the defending team, the kick is retaken; if the ball does not enter the goal and the defending team was impacted, the referee stops play and restarts with an indirect free kick.

LAW 15: THE THROW-IN

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

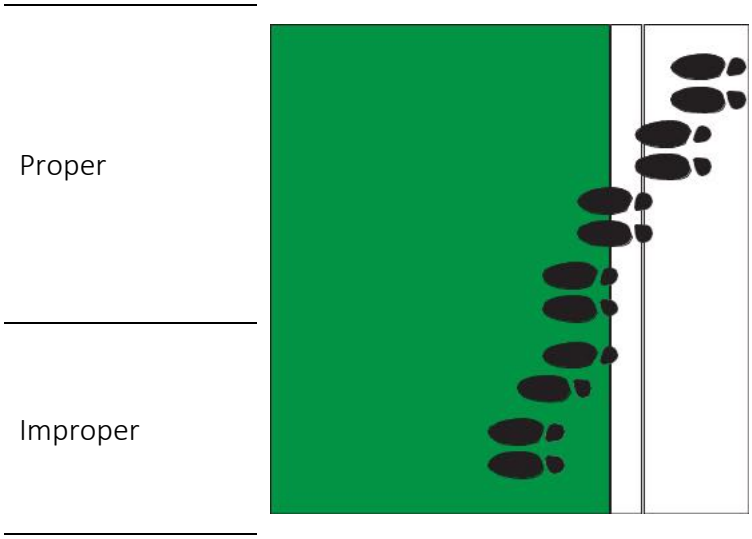
When the ball completely crosses the touchline, it shall be thrown back into the field of play by a player of the team opposite to that of the player who last touched it.

THROW-IN PROCEDURE

A throw-in is awarded when the ball completely passes out of play over a touchline.

- The throw-in is taken by an opponent of the team that last touched the ball before it went out of play.

- The throw-in is taken from the approximate point on the touchline where the ball left the field of play.
- The player taking the throw-in is allowed to move up to 2 yards in either direction.
- The opponents must be at least two yards from the point of the throw-in and must not unfairly distract or impede the thrower.
- At the moment of delivering the ball, the player must face the field of play; have part of each foot touching the ground either on or behind the touchline and use both hands to deliver the ball from behind, and over the head.



- The ball is in play when it is released, and any portion of it is on or over the touchline.
- The thrower must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.
- A goal may not be directly scored from a throw-in.

If, in the referee's judgement, the kicking team is delaying taking a throw-in, the Referee will blow the whistle and then start a five-second visual. If the time limit is exceeded, the throw-in is awarded to the opposing team. Referees are encouraged to use their voice to encourage players to avoid delay.

LAW 16: THE GOAL KICK

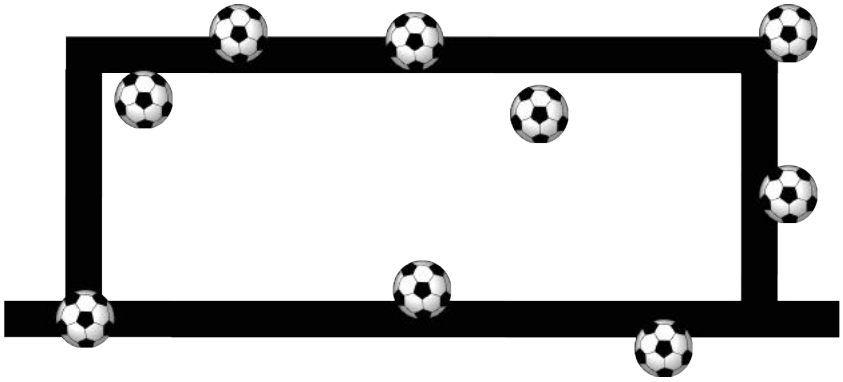
SPIRIT OF THE LAW

A goal kick is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, on the ground, or in the air, having last touched a player of the attacking team, and a goal is not scored.

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.

GOAL KICK PROCEDURE

- The ball must be stationary and is kicked from anywhere in the goal area.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.
- Opponents must be outside the penalty area until the ball is in play.
- The kicker cannot touch the ball a second time before it is touched by any other player.



All of these balls are correctly placed within the goal area for the taking of a goal kick.

If, in the referee's judgement, the kicking team is delaying taking a goal kick, the Referee will blow the whistle and then start an five-second visual countdown. If the time limit is exceeded, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team. Referees are encouraged to use their voice to encourage players to avoid delay.

LAW 17: THE CORNER KICK

SPIRIT OF THE LAW

A corner kick is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, on the ground, or in the air, having last touched a player of the defending team, and a goal is not scored.

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opposing team; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents.

CORNER KICK PROCEDURE

- The ball must be stationary and placed anywhere within the corner area nearest to the point where the ball passed over the goal line.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not need to leave the corner area.
- The corner flagpost must not be moved
- Opponents must remain at least 10 yards from the corner area until the ball is in play
- The kicker must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player

All of these balls are correctly placed within the corner area for the taking of a corner kick.

The referee penalizes:

- The goalkeeper for controlling the ball with their hand(s) /arm(s) for more than 8 seconds (Referee visual countdown last 5 seconds)
- A player for delaying the taking of a goal kick for their team

and may award a corner kick to the opponent for such delay.

Referees are encouraged to use their voice to remind the players to put the ball back into play

PRE-GAME

CONNECTING WITH PEERS

"The Referee team has to be on the same page to work effectively."

KEEP IN MIND: The Referee team members need to help each other check-in. The Referee and Assistant Referees need to be ready to enjoy the game experience and provide a great experience for the players, Coaches, and parents.

SET THE TONE FOR THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT FOR TEAMWORK

After arriving at the field, the Referee, and Assistant Referees should connect, and take a couple of minutes to confirm that everyone is mentally, and physically ready to Referee the game. A few questions to generate the discussion should take care of this step.

KEEP IN MIND: The Referee should keep the game-related instructions simple and focused on the physical, and emotional safety of the players.

REFEREE, AND ASSISTANT REFEREE RESPONSIBILITIES

After the Referee team checks in, they should have a brief discussion about the game. The emphasis should be on maintaining an awareness that will help all three officials identify possible physical, and/or emotional issues with players. The Referee should discuss the process for connecting with the Coach as needed to get help and manage players with physical, and/or emotional issues. The Referee should also provide basic instructions related to Assistant Referee positioning, and signals, including for goals, offside, throw-ins, goal kicks, and corner kicks.

CLUB LINESPERSON

A "Club Linesperson" is a non-certified person such as a parent or other spectator from a team that we ask to volunteer to run the touchline when an Assistant Referee is not available.

The Referee should provide just one instruction to club linespersons: "When the ball leaves the field of play, please raise your flag straight up. I will indicate the direction for the restart."

STEWARDS OF THE GAME MEETING

"The Coach can be the Referee's best friend."

REFEREES AND COACHES WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE A SAFE, FAIR, AND FUN GAME

The Referee team should approach the Coach, and players with a friendly, and helpful attitude to request permission to check players' equipment. Remember, the Referee team, and Coaches have discussed the responsibility they have to work together to ensure a safe environment for the players. This next contact has to be brief, and friendly to help the players relax and confirm last-minute issues if any.

Things to include:

- The Referee should introduce the officiating crew to the players.
- Thank the players for being the best part of AYSO!
- Sometimes, with younger players, ask them to "Thank" their Coach.

CHECK-IN PLAYERS:

The Referee team should now check the players' equipment. Things to include:

- Ask the players for their attention and listen.
- Have an Assistant Referee call out the players' names one by one and check them off against the line-up card.
- As each player is named, check that they have shinguards, are not wearing jewelry or any other dangerous items, and that the shoes are safe.
- The goalkeeper's shirt must be different than all the other players' shirts.
- Ensure that a player is designated as the captain on the field of play but is not required to be wearing a Captain's armband.
- Wish them good luck and tell them when they need to get on the field of play. Example: "When you hear my whistle, please get on the field of play, and be ready to start the game. Thank you, and good luck."

REFEREE PRE-GAME ACTIVITIES

- Check field and goal
- Pre-game meeting of the Referee crew
- Player check-in: provide any unique procedural guidance
- Stewards of the Game Meeting
- Call for captains
- Coin flip
- Check line-up cards
- Kick-off

POST-GAME

POST-GAME RESPONSIBILITIES

"The job is not done until the paperwork is done!"

SUPERVISE TEAMS' HANDSHAKE

When the game time expires, the Referee blows the whistle and gets ready to supervise the teams' handshake process with help from the Assistant Referees.

Things to do include:

- Collect, and return the soccer ball(s) to the owner.
- Allow the Coaches to have their teams line up in the middle of the field and get ready to shake hands.
- As the players move in opposite directions to shake hands, the Referee team can be providing positive and encouraging feedback to both teams. "Good game" "Well done" "Good job"
- If needed, encourage the players to display good sportsmanship during this process.
- When the players come by to shake hands with the Referees, they can say "Thank you"
- Coaches and Referees should use this opportunity to model good behavior by shaking hands and offering friendly words to each other.
- Supervising this process in a positive, and friendly manner projects good sportsmanship, and professionalism.

COMPLETE, AND SUBMIT THE GAME REPORT

The Referee team completes the lineup cards while the game is fresh in their mind:

- Confirm the half-time score and final score with both Assistant Referees.
- Ensure the same score is recorded on each game card. Complete misconduct report if needed.
- Ask both Assistant Referees to review the completed report(s).
- Submit the completed report(s) to the proper competition authority.

The Referee should thank the Assistant Referees or Club Linesperson for their help in managing the game.

DUTIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AYSO PARTICIPANTS

ALL PARTICIPANTS

It shall be the duty of each coach, referee, other volunteer, team member, spectator, and other participant to:

- Conduct himself/herself in a manner becoming a member of AYSO, and consistent with the AYSO Philosophies, and the highest standards of conduct.
- Work together as a team in support of the children playing the match, and in alignment with the Stewards of the Game, and Kids Zone programs to promote a safe, fair, fun environment.
- Comply with, and promote compliance with the Bylaws, Rules & Regulations, and Policies, including those related to registration, certification, and training.
- Encourage clean competition and good sportsmanship.
- Prohibit, and abstain from making negative comments, and complaints about officiating.
- Present a healthy, athletic environment for team members, including but not limited to, not consuming alcoholic beverages, using tobacco products, or smoking or simulating smoking or the use of tobacco products during practices or matches or near the soccer fields.

COACHES

Each coach must:

- Remain within the coaches' technical area during the match; a maximum of two coaches is permitted for each team.
- Limit his/her sideline participation during AYSO matches to comments that are positive, and/or encouraging, with limited supportive instruction

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PLAYERS

Can players wear Medical Alert Bracelets?

Youths may participate in games, and practices while wearing medical alert bracelets. This information must remain visible. However, to ensure the bracelet does not present a danger to the player or other players it must be secured to the player with tape, a cloth wristband, or something equivalent taking care to leave the information visible.

We must all recognize that if the bracelet is removed, and lost or hidden in any way, the child might be put in danger, particularly if the parents are not present to ensure that the medical condition is known.

We must also recognize that it is unlikely that a medical alert bracelet, when properly covered, will pose a danger to the other players. Medical alert sports bands with a snug-fitting soft, polyester ribbon band are available and should be permitted without modification.

May a player wear a cast or splint?

AYSO National Rules & Regulations paragraph VII.D states: "Team members shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any match with any type of cast or splint."

May a player remove a cast or splint in order to participate?

AYSO National Rules & Regulations paragraph VI.E. states: "***Removal of any type of cast, splint or hard inserts at the field or surrounding area in order to participate shall disqualify the team member from practice or match participation***."

Removable casts are designed to facilitate personal hygiene and dressing; they are not meant to be removed so that a player may engage in contact sports.

Are players permitted to wear knee braces?

AYSO National Policy Statement 2.9 titled "Knee Braces" reads as follows: "AYSO will not prohibit the use of knee braces by players in AYSO events, and programs; ***provided that the knee brace is adequately covered and padded*** in the opinion of the Referee to eliminate the possibility of its use causing injury to other players on the field of play."

The difference between casts or splints, and knee braces is that a cast or splint is used for the treatment of a temporary injury to provide for healing. The use of a knee brace is different in that it is used to provide support, and/or flexibility. Knee braces are designed to allow for flexibility of movement, while conversely, a cast or splint is designed to restrict mobility.

Are players permitted to wear any other kind of medical device?

If the device is needed to restrict mobility, protect an injury or support proper alignment to expedite the healing process of a temporary injury, and is hard (cast, splint, etc.) then this is not allowed. If, on the other hand, the protective device is used to provide support, and flexibility or enable an otherwise healthy player to function normally such as a knee brace, prosthesis,

hearing aid, insulin pump/monitor, monitoring device, concussion impact reduction aids such soft header helmets and collars that are age and size appropriate, etc., then this would be allowed provided the device was sufficiently padded to prevent injury to other players. The Laws of the Game specify that "A player must not use equipment or wear anything dangerous." The Referee is the sole judge of whether or not the individual item in question is permissible to wear in the game.

May players wear glasses?

Players who require prescription glasses are to be allowed to wear them during practices, and games. For the greatest safety, retaining straps should be worn or rubber bands may be used for this purpose. Prescription goggles, such as the type used by racquetball players, are also permitted subject to the approval of the Referee before the start of the match. Spectacle guards made of plastic or other hard material are not permitted.

May players wear hearing aids?

Players who normally wear hearing aids are also allowed to wear them during practices or games. Hearing device implants must be protected with the manufacturers protective headband device to aid in keeping the unit protected and secure. Parents should consult their medical professional for further guidance.

Are players permitted to wear mouthguards?

AYSO does not prohibit the use of mouthguards. Parents are encouraged to consult their child's dentist or orthodontist to determine what, if any, mouthguard is appropriate for their child. Players wearing mouthguards should not be prevented from participating in practice or games.

Are players permitted to wear jewelry, earrings, or studs?

Players shall not wear anything that is dangerous to either themselves or other players subject to the referee's approval under Law 4 of the IFAB Laws of the Game. Dangerous items (e.g., necklaces, bracelets, watches, earrings) must be removed before the player is allowed to participate in a practice or game. Cultural, religious and medical items are permitted but must be safely and securely covered.

Jewelry (removable and those designed to be non-removable), including earrings, of any kind worn in any visible body piercing or any hard replacement stud used when the jewelry is not being worn must be removed. Covering the jewelry or hard replacement stud with tape, padding or bandage is not sufficient; the jewelry or hard replacement stud must be removed before practice or playing.

Subject to the approval of the Referee, various soft, flexible materials that present no danger to the player or other players may be used to keep recent body piercings open for participation during games.

In the case of visible taped-over or bandaged suspected piercings, Referees must not ask players to lift or remove articles of clothing or bandages. It is acceptable, however, to ask a player if the tape or bandages is covering an earring. The Referee must accept the answer provided, regardless of suspicion, and if in the opinion of the Referee, the item is deemed to be dangerous, the player will not be allowed to participate on that day.

Coaches have the responsibility of not allowing players wearing jewelry to participate in practices or games.

Coaches and Referees are role models and should avoid wearing jewelry, earrings, and hard replacement studs during practices or games.

Are players permitted to wear hats for medical or religious reasons?

The Laws of the Game specify that "A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous." The Referee is the sole judge of whether or not the individual item in question is permissible to wear in the game. The Referee has the obligation, and the right to allow or disallow players wearing additional equipment depending upon the Referee's best judgment.

Players are generally not permitted to wear hats, but items used to secure hair such as sweatbands, bandanas, scarves, etc. are sometimes permitted. Players may be allowed to wear soft hats or caps without hard brims if the weather is inclement. Goalkeepers may wear a soft-brimmed hat or cap. In addition to the above requirements the brim must also be made of a soft material and must be approved by the Referee. Baseball-style caps with hard brims are not acceptable even if worn backward. These items should be a neutral color free of inappropriate design, logo, or meaning. They must not constitute a danger to the player or other players and must be approved by the Referee.

Referees may allow a player to wear a hat with a soft brim, and otherwise not dangerous to the player or other players if, indeed, the player is known to be unusually susceptible to skin cancer from exposure to the sun or the head garment is required by the player's religion.

Are there any special requirements regarding player fingernails?

There is no official AYSO or USSF position on the length of players' fingernails. Players are not allowed to "wear" anything that is dangerous to themselves or another player. The acceptable length, and shape or adornment of fingernails is up to the good judgment of the Referee. In general, long or fake fingernails are not to be considered dangerous by themselves. However, the use of such as a deterrent should be sanctioned according to the severity of use.

Are there any special requirements for soccer shoes, and shinguards?

Soccer shoes, and shinguards made by any established soccer equipment manufacturer are acceptable. Other shoes are acceptable if, in the opinion of the Referee, they are not dangerous to the player wearing them or to another player, and the shinguards afford the player a reasonable degree of protection.

Team members must wear shinguards that provide a reasonable degree of protection, and that are completely covered by their socks, to participate in any practice or match. Though the Laws of the Game impose responsibility for the size and suitability of shinguards upon the players, the referee will remain responsible for determining the safety of each player's equipment. A piece of cardboard rolled up newspaper or similar makeshift items do not constitute proper shinguards. The Referee must inspect all cleats to ensure there are no sharp edges; this is especially important for aluminum and nylon cleats.

Shinguards must be completely covered by the player's stockings. Players are not allowed to wear their shinguards over their stockings, and then roll the stockings down over the shinguards. The shinguards must be worn completely under the stockings.

Are toe cleats illegal on soccer shoes?

It has been perpetuated that toe cleats are illegal in soccer. This may have developed from the fact that some players new to the game felt they should wear cleats for soccer games, and showed up in baseball shoes which often have cleats on the toe. Many styles of soccer shoes are now on the market, and some of them have cleat configurations that wrap across the toe. A blanket statement that toe cleats are not allowed is too narrow. The myth that metal cleats are not legal is also not uncommon. Metal cleats (usually aluminum) are acceptable, but the Referee must inspect all types of cleats on shoes to ensure that there are no burrs or sharp edges, and, if they exist, burrs or sharp edges must be removed before the player is allowed to participate. The Referee must examine the particular footwear in question, and determine if it presents any unreasonable danger to the participants.

Are players permitted to wear sleeveless jerseys?

Although Law 4 states that jerseys must have sleeves, it is still the position of both USSF and AYSO that no individual or team should be kept from playing because their jerseys do not have sleeves. Players are also not prohibited from rolling or tying up jersey sleeves provided it is done safely.

Are Captain(s) required to wear Captain armbands?

Although Law 4 states that captain armbands are required, AYSO just requires the coach to identify the captain on the field of play, but is not required to be wearing a Captain's armband.

Are players permitted to play with hair beads/clips/bobby pins?

Hair beads, clips, and bobby pins that are not securely fastened to the head can cause injury to the player, and others. For safety reasons, the referee will disallow the player to participate until these items are either secured or removed. (See Safety Requirements for Player's Equipment – Law 4)

May players wear additional protective equipment?

The Laws of the Game specify the following regarding other equipment:

> *"Non-dangerous protective equipment, for example, headgear, facemasks, and knee, and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material is permitted as are goalkeepers' caps, and sports spectacles."*

AYSO neither endorses nor refutes the claims of companies that produce products intended to increase player safety. It is the responsibility of the Referee to examine the specific piece of equipment in question and then decide whether or not it presents any danger to the player themselves or other players. The Referee has the obligation, and right to allow or disallow players wearing the item depending upon the Referee's best judgment.

Face masks similar to the type hockey goalies or football players wear are not allowed for goalkeepers or field players because they are constructed of hard material and would pose a danger to other players.

Players may be allowed to wear soft hats or caps without brims. They must not constitute a danger to the player or other players and must be approved by the Referee. Goalkeepers may wear a brimmed hat or cap. In addition to the above requirements the brim must also be made of a soft material and must be approved by the Referee. Baseball-style caps with hard brims are not acceptable even if worn backward.

May players wear sweatbands, bandanas, scarves, or other items to secure hair?

The Referee is the sole judge of whether or not such items may be worn based on the Referee's assessment of the particular item, and its function. Supplemental items worn for adornment are generally not permitted. Items the Referee believes are not dangerous to the player or other players, and serve the purpose of hair control, perspiration absorption or to conform to religious requirements are permitted. These items should be a neutral color, and be free of inappropriate design, logo, or meaning.

May players wear gloves?

Goalkeepers are traditionally allowed to wear gloves. Other players may also wear gloves if, in the opinion of the Referee, the equipment poses no danger.

Is a female player allowed to use her hands to protect her chest?

All players (male and female) may PROTECT themselves from being hit by the ball by using their hands or hands. This may happen unexpectedly during play or from a free kick when they are positioned as defensive players in a wall (commonly seen at upper levels of play). Self-defense is not an offense; however, DELIBERATE use of the hands to CONTROL the ball or otherwise alter its path, is an offense.

Referees are charged with determining whether or not the contact of the ball with the hand was to control the ball or for self-protection. Female players who use their hands or arms to CONTROL a ball that is about to hit them in the chest are guilty of handling the ball. The same would be true for male players who used their hands or arms to CONTROL a ball that was about

to hit them in the face or groin area.

REFEREE EQUIPMENT

What is the uniform dress code for Referees?

The AYSO National Referee Program encourages Referees, and Assistant Referees to follow the uniform standards for match officials established by USSF. Throughout the soccer community, Referees, and Assistant Referees are identified by their uniforms.

What is the USSF Referee Uniform standard?

REFEREE SHIRT

AYSO referees should wear the shirt style, and colors currently recommended by the United States Soccer Federation. The colors are as follows:

Primary shirt color:

- Yellow

Alternate colors:

- Black
- Red
- Blue
- Green
- Pink

The alternate jersey may be worn when the yellow jersey will not provide a clear contrast to either team's shirt colors. Uniformity on the part of Referees establishes initial credibility for them as a team. The Referee, and ARs should wear shirts of similar color, and style. If the Referee wears an alternate jersey of a color that the ARs do not have, the ARs' jerseys, whenever possible, should match each other.

REFEREE SHORTS

- Solid black
- Length not less than 3 or more than 7 inches above the knee.

REFEREE SOCKS

- Official black referee socks, the style currently recommended by the United States Soccer Federation
- Pulled up over the calf

REFEREE BADGE

During AYSO games, the only badge appropriate for a referee to wear is the current AYSO referee certification level badge earned by the referee, subject to the following exceptions:

- An International Referee may wear a FIFA badge.
- If provided, special referee tournament badges may be worn by referees during that tournament's games.

A referee may not wear more than one badge on the uniform.

REFEREE FOOTWEAR

- Black or black with white trim
- Smooth, turf, or cleated soles
- Cleaned, and polished regularly

Can the Referee wear alternative garments for Religious or Medical reasons?

Exceptions will be made to accommodate Religious or Medical needs. Please work with your Referee Administrator.

What is the appropriate Referee badge for AYSO Referees?

The only badge appropriate for Referees to wear is the highest AYSO Referee certification level badge earned by the Referee. AYSO Green Referee certification level badges (U8 Official, Regional Referee, Intermediate Referee) are available for youth Referees. Exceptions: A FIFA Professional Referee may wear their FIFA badge, special AYSO anniversary badges may be worn for the specified season and, if provided, special Referee tournament badges may be worn by Referees during that tournament's games.

Are Referees permitted to wear a cast or splint while Refereeing?

AYSO National Rules & Regulations prohibit players from participating in practices or games while wearing a cast or splint (even with a doctor's permission). However, there is no such prohibition for Referees to officiate while wearing a cast or splint even if they are youth Referees. The likelihood of an injury to players occurring from contact with the Referee's cast or splint is very remote. Some padding on the cast may add a measure of protection.

May Referees wear hats or sunglasses?

If hats are worn for sun-protection health reasons, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Solid black or predominately black with white trim
- Hats should bear no logo or slogans, with the exception that AYSO logos (traditional, Regional, or tournament) are permitted.

Sunglasses are discouraged for Referees as this restricts communication through eye contact with players and are generally considered unnecessary adornment.

PROCEDURES

Who is responsible for the players' Player Registration Forms?

It is the Coach's responsibility to have the Player Registration Forms at all practices, and games. Referees are not required, nor recommended, to ask Coaches to prove that they have Player Registration Forms in their possession at games. Referees should not require Coaches to produce the forms at matches as this would, in effect, put the Referee in the position of assuming a responsibility that properly belongs to the Coach.

Are Referees required to see a "AYSO Return to Participation Release Form" before allowing a player to participate in games following a known serious injury or sickness which required professional medical attention?

No, this is not the Referee's responsibility.

What is the recommended way to deal with player violence?

Many possible scenarios of violence exist. The Referee must assess each situation, and determine appropriate action considering personal safety, player safety, and game control.

The Laws of the Game do not require anyone to place themselves in peril, and AYSO Referees should not subject themselves to undue personal risk. However, violence needs to be stopped if it erupts, and Referees need to assist in controlling it when it can be done without unduly risking personal safety.

Recommended procedures for Referees:

- Move quickly to the location of the problem.
- Blow the whistle loudly in the vicinity of the fracas to distract the "combatants".
- Assess the risk to the Referees' personal safety by further intervention, and do not attempt to intervene if it is unsafe. Referees are not required to put their safety at risk.
- Consider intervention only if possible, without undue personal risk. A Referee who intervenes during player violence must:
    - Remain in a "passive role."
    - Refrain from physically touching any players or other persons involved.
    - Endeavor to form a barrier between "combatants".
    - Urge the Coaching staff to assist.
    - Endeavor to contain the fracas.
    - Be aware of the reactions of other players and discourage them from joining the fracas.
    - Provide a detailed report of the facts of the incident in the game report for reference.

Addressing violent conduct is everyone's job. Regional, Area, and Section staff should be proactive in taking steps to address the issue with programs such as Safe Haven, and Kids Zone.

Prompt disciplinary responses are encouraged if violence occurs during matches.

Are there any additional penalties for players or Coaches who are sent off (red card) or spectators who are asked to leave the vicinity of the field because of their behavior?

A mandatory additional one-game suspension is required for any player, substitute, or substituted player sent off (red card). The governing body of the competition may impose additional disciplinary action against any person, including players, Coaches, and spectators, guilty of misconduct.

The Referee is required to provide the appropriate authorities with a match report, or incident report for spectators, which includes information on any disciplinary action taken, and any other incidents that occurred before, during, or after the match.

It is the governing body's responsibility to review the Referee's match report and to take whatever additional action they feel appropriate.

Can a Referee display a misconduct card to a U10 player?

Misconduct is rare in younger players' games, but if it occurs in the U9 or U10 game, cards should not be shown. The referee should approach the offending player's coach, explain the misconduct to the coach while showing the coach you are recording the misconduct on your match report. The misconduct should also be recorded on the back of the game card and a misconduct form completed as required by the competition authorities. In U11 and U12 games, the display of a card is discouraged, and handling it through the Coach is preferable, but in rare cases, the display of the card may be appropriate.

May a U10 player circumvent the "no punting" by bouncing the ball to a teammate to volley?

Circumventing the Player Development Initiative is not allowed and the referee should stop play, explain this to the goalkeeper, and to restart with a dropped ball back to the goalkeeper.

May players drink water during the game?

Players are permitted to drink water during a stoppage in the play but only on the touchline; they may also do so during play on their touchline if they don't interfere with active play. It is not permitted to throw water containers onto the field.

If the Referee allows a Coach, parent, or other responsible adult to enter the field to assess an injured player, must that player leave the field, and, if so, when may the player reenter?

Law 5 requires the Referee to stop the match if, in their opinion, a player is seriously injured. Law 5 also requires the Referee to ensure that the player leaves the field of play.

The determination of what constitutes a 'serious injury' should take into account the player's age. The younger the player, the quicker the Referee's whistle to stop the game. The Referee should then beckon the Coach to come to assess the injured player.

If the Referee believes the player is only slightly injured, play should be allowed to continue until the ball is out of play. In this case, the injured player is not required to leave the field of play unless someone has entered to assess the injury.

As soon as it is safe to do so, the person responsible for checking the injured player's condition

must escort the player off the field of play. This allows time for determination of the player's ability to safely continue playing.

If a goalkeeper is injured but not being substituted, he or she may be treated on the field of play and is not required to leave. Injuries involving a goalkeeper, and another player, and any severe injury to a player such as a concussion, broken leg, etc. may also be treated on the field of play.

Before an injured player may return to the field of play, the match must have restarted, and the Referee signaled permission for the player to return. If the ball is in play, entry must be from a touchline; if the ball is not in play entry may be from a goal line or a touchline.

The Referee and the Assistant Referees must remain alert as to when the player is ready to return, and the Referee should give permission to return at the earliest opportunity so that the player's team is returned to full strength.

What procedure should be followed regarding thunder, and lightning storms?

When thunder is heard, it is within striking distance. Seek shelter immediately. Do not wait for the rain to start before seeking shelter, and do not leave shelter just because the rain has ended.

Restart games after no thunder has been heard for 30 minutes or if there is a warning system in place, the community ALL CLEAR SIREN has been sounded.

Many communities and parks systems have lightning detection, and tornado warning systems in place. Obey the rules established at these facilities. When storm warning systems indicate severe weather danger, usually by siren, cease all field activities, and seek shelter immediately.

Can a Referee wear Meta Glasses (recording device) during a match?

The IFAB Law allows body cameras if the competition organizer supplies the cameras, has control of the footage and complies with the relevant guidelines.

In that AYSO does not have control of the footage, AYSO does not approve the use of body cameras or similar recording devices by the Referee.

MISCELLANEOUS

Can a Youth become a certified Instructor or Referee Mentor?

Youth volunteers may not be certified as an Instructor or serve as a Lead Instructor in any discipline, given the similarity between instructing and mentoring, creating a certification to allow youth referees to mentor other youth referees would violate the AYSO policy, which exists to minimize potential liability issues. The best way for an experienced youth referee to "mentor" a less experienced youth referee would be to have the experienced youth together with an adult mentor provide guidance to the less experienced youth referee.

May Regions adopt local playing rules outside of IFAB, and AYSO rules?

The very first line of the AYSO National Rules & Regulations states, "All AYSO games shall be conducted per the current IFAB Laws of the Game, and decisions of the International Board…" The bulk of the remaining content of the AYSO National Rules & Regulations clarifies the kind of specific exceptions which are permitted. In the beginning of the IFAB Laws of the Game under "Modifications" it states, "Subject to the agreement of the national association concerned, and provided the principles of these Laws are maintained, the Laws may be modified in their application…", then specifies the kinds of modifications that are permissible. These statements endeavor to make it clear how AYSO games should be played, and who, how, and to what extent the Laws may be modified.

Making a local rule in the presumed interest of player safety may appear well-intentioned on the surface but careful consideration must be given to the overall effect of the rule, and whether or not it is permissible or, in fact, beneficial. It is the job of Coaches to teach players correct techniques to help them avoid injury to themselves, and others. It is the job of Referees to learn to recognize when skills are executed correctly or not.

Players should develop, Coaches should teach, and Referees should learn to recognize the skills that are a part of the game of soccer. When we make a local rule that takes away one or more of the skills used in playing the game this lessens the opportunities for players to learn to execute the skill correctly, Coaches to teach the skill, and Referees to recognize the skill performed legally. An argument could be made that such local rules actually may cause more injuries than they prevent because Coaches will be discouraged from teaching correct techniques to the players since there is a local rule prohibiting the skill.

Does AYSO have any "Mercy Rules," "Slaughter Rules" or "Blowout Rules"?

There are no such rules in AYSO to deal with games where one team is dominating the scoring. In any competition, there is a chance that the score will be lopsided. We believe such things as "Blowout Rules," "Mercy Rules," "Slaughter Rules," etc. that end a game prematurely or "play short" rules that require the winning team to play with fewer than the allowable number of players or rules that require teams to somehow stop scoring goals only penalizes a team for accomplishing what it has been trained to accomplish (score goals), and sends the wrong message to the losing team.

A major part of the sport is enjoying the process of playing by the players- not just who ultimately wins. The message we want to send is "keep on trying"- not to give up just because it is difficult. Losing, when dealt with appropriately, builds character, and resolves to improve. Mercy Rules, play-short rules, or similar rules potentially build a willingness to give up early or to want rules in place to give teams an unfair advantage just because they are losing.

Each team is entitled to start and play the game with the maximum number of players allowable. Nowhere in the Laws of the Game or the AYSO National Coaching or Refereeing Program is it suggested or required to have a winning team play with fewer players than the losing team or for the game to end early or similar rules because the score is lopsided. AYSO's "Balanced Team" concept refers to making an honest attempt to balance the skill level of teams within an age group when teams are formed before the beginning of the season.

In situations where one or both teams are short a significant number of players; a "friendly match" could be organized by combining/sharing players from one or both teams. Where won/loss standings are recorded, the outcome of the "friendly match" would not affect the standings. It should be predetermined and agreed upon in advance how the official outcome of the regularly scheduled game is to be recorded. Regions should not adopt local rules, and Referees should not interfere with games because of lopsided scores. It is a player's game, and they should be given the full playing time without undue interference to enjoy and learn from the process.

When are substitutions allowed in AYSO U13/U14, U15/U16, and U17/U18/U19 games where Monitored (free) Substitution is being used rather than the normal AYSO substitution at "quarters"?

Monitored Substitution is allowed in U13/U14, U15/U16 and U17/U18/U19 age divisions only if it is handled in a manner that will ensure that every participant plays at least one half of every game by requiring a separate time monitor, independent of the Coaches, who checks each player in or out of the game.

Where Monitored Substitution is being used in U13/U14, U15/U16 and U17/U18/U19 games, substitutions will be permitted with the Referee's permission during any stoppage in play as specified in the IFAB Laws of the Game, Law 3 (The Number of Players) as well as in the section titled "Practical Guidelines for Match Officials". Substitution rules used in High School, College or other soccer organizations do not apply to AYSO games. The substitution procedures used in games played according to the IFAB Laws of the Game will be in effect. Namely, when a substitution is requested (the Assistant Referee signals a substitution has been requested), the

Referee will determine when there is an appropriate stoppage in play and will then allow the substitution to occur as outlined by the Laws of the Game.

Stoppages in play include the eight identified restarts plus other stoppages where, in the opinion of the Referee, the substitution will not unfairly interfere with play, e.g., injury stoppages, outside agent stoppages, stoppages to administer misconduct sanctions, and free kicks where the team taking the kick has not elected to take a quick kick.

REFEREE SUMMARY SHEET

PRE-GAME ACTIVITIES

- Check field goals, flags, and markings for safety and correctness.
- Check players' uniforms, and equipment for safety
- Check the ball for proper inflation, size, and safety (no surface cuts).
- Meet with the Assistant Referees and discuss responsibilities.
- Meet with both Coaches, and discuss teamwork in support of a safe, fair, and fun game.

KICK-OFF

- Players, other than the kicker, must be in their half of the field.
- Opponents of the kicker must not enter the center circle until the ball is kicked.
- The ball is stationary on the center mark.
- The Referee whistles for the start of play starting their watch when the ball is kicked.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves (any distance, any direction).
- If the kick-off is not properly taken, it must be retaken.
- If the kicker touches the ball again before anyone else, Indirect Free Kick for the opponents.

DIRECT FREE KICKS

- Generally given for unfair/unsafe contact between a player and opponent
- Careless, Reckless or Excessive Force: Kick, strike, trip, push, charge, jump, tackle
- Spits/bites, holds, impedes with contact, throws an object, handball

INDIRECT FREE KICKS

- Generally given for non-contact offenses between two opponents
- The Referee must give the indirect free kick signal (raised arm)
- By anyone: dangerous play, impeding an opponent without contact, initiating deliberate trick play to the goalkeeper, committing any other offense that play is stopped to caution or send off a player
- By goalkeeper:
    - Touches the ball a second time with hands after releasing, before it touches another player
    - Deliberately handles the ball after receiving it directly from a teammate's throw-in
    - Deliberately handles the ball after a deliberate kick to the goalkeeper from a teammate

PENALTY KICK ENCROACHMENT

- By a defender, the ball goes into the goal: GOAL
- By a defender, the ball does not go into the goal: IMPACT – RETAKE; NO IMPACT – NO RETAKE
- By an attacker, the ball goes in the goal: IMPACT – RETAKE; NO IMPACT - GOAL
- By an attacker, the ball does not go into the goal: Indirect Free Kick for defending team
- By both teams: IMPACT – RETAKE; NO IMPACT – GOAL/NO RETAKE

RESTART	WHEN AWARDED	BALL PLACEMENT	OPPONENTS	SCORE DIRECTLY?	WHEN IN PLAY
Kick-off (KO)	Start of each half; after each goal	Center of field	10 yards from the ball; in own half	Yes (only against an opponent)	Kicked and clearly moves
Throw-in (TI)	The ball out over the touchline A player delays taking a throw-in for more than 5 seconds, throw-in goes to the opponent	Where it went out	2 yards from the point of throw-in	No	Breaks the plane of the touchline
Goal kick (GK)	Ball out over the goal line, not a goal scored, and last touched by an attacker	Anywhere in the goal area	Outside penalty area	Yes (only against an opponent)	Kicked and clearly moves
Corner kick (CK)	Ball is out over the goal line, not a goal, last touched by a defender: GK controls the ball with hands longer than 8 seconds A player delays taking a goal kick for more than 5 seconds	Anywhere in the corner area	10 yards from the corner area	Yes (only against an opponent)	Kicked and clearly moves
Dropped ball (DB)	Referee stops play	Location when stopped[1]	4.5 yards for all players not taking the DB	No	Touches ground
Free kick (FK)	Offense	Place of offense[2]	10 yards (for IDFK in the goal area against defenders, defenders may be on the goal line between goalposts)	DFK: Yes (only against an opponent); IDFK: No	Kicked and clearly moves
Penalty kick (PK)	DFK foul by a defender in their penalty area	Penalty mark	10 yards, outside PA, behind the ball	Yes	Kicked and clearly moves

NOTES: 1. If in the penalty area or last touch in the penalty area when play was stopped, dropped to the goalkeeper.

2. If in the goal area, place the ball on the "6-yard" line if against defenders; place the ball anywhere in the goal area if against attackers. If the offense was off the field of play, play is restarted with a kick on the nearest boundary line.

OFFSIDE POSITION

- A player is in the opponent's half of the field, and
- A player is closer to the opponent's goal line than the ball, and
- A player is closer to the opponent's goal line than either of the last two opponents

OFFSIDE OFFENSE

- A player is in an offside position when the ball was last touched or played by a teammate, and:
    - Interferes with play (touches the ball); OR
    - Interferes with an opponent (keeps them from playing the ball); OR
    - Gains an advantage by being in an offside position (ball rebounds to them)
- No offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from a goal kick, throw-in, or corner kick

CAUTIONABLE OFFENSES

- Unsporting behavior
- Dissent by word or action
- Persistent offenses
- Delaying the restart of play
- Failure to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a dropped ball, corner kick, free kick, or throw-in
- Entering, re-entering or deliberately leaving the field of play without the Referee's permission
- Entering the Referee review area (RRA)
- Excessively using the "review" (TV screen) signal

SENDING-OFF OFFENSES

- Serious foul play
- Violent conduct
- Biting or spitting at someone
- Denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball
- Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by committing a non-deliberate handball offense outside their own penalty area
- Denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by an offense punishable with a free kick or penalty kick
- Using offensive, insulting or abusive language, and/or action(s)
- Receiving a second caution in the same match

MISCONDUCT RESTARTS

- Direct free kick if play stopped for misconduct including a direct free kick foul
- Indirect free kick if play stopped for any other misconduct on the field
- Dropped ball if misconduct occurred off the field; indirect free kick if the Referee thinks the player left the field to commit it
- If misconduct occurs while the ball is out of play, restart per the original reason for the stoppage

REFEREE POSITIONING

- Left (standard) diagonal: run toward the left corner flag; try to stay to the left of the ball
- Right (or reverse) diagonal: run toward the right corner flag; try to stay to the right of the ball
- During dynamic play try to be approximately 10-15 yards from play, and keep play between the Referee, and the lead Assistant Referee. Angle first, then proximity.

ASSISTANT REFEREE POSITIONING

- Default position: stay even with the second-to-last opponent to watch for offside
- If the second-to-last opponent moves into the opponent's half of the field, stay at the halfway line (or the build-out line in U9 & U10).
- If the ball moves closer to the opponent's goal line than the second-to-last opponent stay even with the ball –to the goal line if necessary

APPENDIX

Source: AYSO National Rules & Regulations except where noted

LAW 1 — THE FIELD

[RETURN TO GUIDELINE, LAW 1]

FIELD ASPECT	U8 AND YOUNGER	U9 AND U10	U11 AND U12	U13 AND OLDER
Length (yards)	25–35	55–65	70–80	100–130
Width (yards)	15–25	35–45	45–55	50–100
Center Circle radius (yards)	5	8	8	10
Goal Area (yards)	None	4x8	5x16	6x20
Penalty Area (yards)	None	12x24	14x36	18x44
Goal line to penalty mark (yards)	None	10	10	12
Max Goal Size, Height by Width (feet)	4x6	6.5x18.5	7x21	8x24
Recommended goal size (feet)	4x6	6.5x12	6.5x18.5	8x24

LAW 2 — THE BALL

[RETURN TO GUIDELINE, LAW 2]

AGE DIVISION	SIZE	CIRCUMFERENCE	WEIGHT
Schoolyard, U6, U7 & U8	3	23 – 25 inches	10 – 12 oz.
U9, U10, U11 & U12	4	25 – 26.5 inches	12 – 14 oz.
U13, U14, U15, U16 U17 & U19	5	26.5 – 28 inches	14 – 16 oz.

AGE DIVISION	PLAYERS PER TEAM ON FIELD	MAXIMUM NUMBER OF TEAM MEMBERS	MINIMUM NUMBER OF TEAM MEMBERS
Schoolyard, U6, U7 & U8	4-a-side (No goalkeepers)	6	5
U9 & U10	7-a-side, 5 minimum	10	8
U11 & U12	9-a-side, 6 minimum	12	10
U13 & U14	11-a-side, 7 minimum	22	12
U15 & U16	11-a-side, 7 minimum	22	12
U17, U18 & U19	11-a-side, 7 minimum	22	12

Source for minimum players in small-sided games, U9 to U12: Small-Side Matches section of the AYSO Reference Book

LAW 7 — THE DURATION OF THE MATCH

[RETURN TO GUIDELINE, LAW 7]

AGE DIVISION	MAXIMUM DURATION OF HALF
Playground	Not applicable
Schoolyard	10 minutes
U6	10 minutes
U7 & U8	20 minutes
U9 & U10	25 minutes
U11 & U12	30 minutes
U13 & U14	35 minutes
U15 & U16	40 minutes
U17, U18 & U19	45 minutes