

Revision of the Laws of the Game Questions and Answers

01 The Field of Play

Q1: Why is it not allowed for the field of play to have some parts which are grass and some which are artificial?

This is for safety reasons as different footwear is needed for artificial and grass surfaces, especially in wet weather conditions. There is also a potential danger that the 'boundary' where grass and artificial surfaces meet could become uneven and dangerous.

Q2: Why is it suggested in the Practical Guidelines that if there is a corner flag missing the game should be played?

The IFAB wants to encourage football, especially at the lowest levels, and if, for example, a corner flag(s) is missing the game can still be played without problems. The matter must be reported afterwards but at least everyone will have played in a match.

Q3: Why are (non-commercial) logos allowed on corner flags?

The IFAB is applying the same standards used for the balls. A club or competition can have their logo on the flag (but not on the flagposts) as long as there is no commercial advertising.

02 The Ball

Q1: Why is Law 2 the only Law which has no changes?

The IFAB has looked carefully at the wording and, apart from some English text changes, nothing about the content needed changing.

03 The Players

Q1: Why does it say that a match can not continue if a team has fewer than 7 players as many people thought this was already the Law?

Until now it was only a recommendation from The IFAB that a match should not continue with fewer than seven players in a team; National FAs were allowed to make a ruling but most did not. The Laws always said that a match could not start if a team has fewer than seven players, so it is logical that this should also apply during the match.



Q2: Why is it now a direct free kick if a substitute or team official interferes with play or an opponent when it used to be an indirect free kick?

There is a growing problem of interference with play or an opponent by substitutes warming up behind the goal line, or team officials, and this must be discouraged. A direct free kick (and a penalty if in their own half) is a strong sanction - this is especially important if a substitute or team officials enters the penalty area and stops a goal. 'Fair play' says that awarding a penalty kick restores the lost opportunity to score.

Q3: Why can the referee now allow a goal if someone other than player touches the ball and it still goes in the goal?

This is a 'fair play' change which applies the advantage principle so that if someone or something touches the ball but it still goes in the goal, and the defenders were not prevented from playing the ball, the goal should be allowed as this is what football would expect. For example, if a substitute/team official tries unsuccessfully to stop an opponents' shot going into the goal then it is clearly 'fair play' to allow the goal to be awarded. The exception is that the goal can not be allowed if it is scored against the opponents.

04 The Players' Equipment

Q1: Why has the wording for tape on socks been changed to include other material?

This was changed because some players were wearing/using material which was not tape (e.g. ankle socks) and which was a different colour to the sock.

Q2: Why can a player who loses a shinguard or boot accidentally be allowed to carry on playing?

It is unfair that a player who loses a boot or shinguard by accident has to stop playing immediately – it seems fair to allow the player to have until the next restart of play to put it back on.

Q3: Why does the Law mention the lower edge (hem) of the shorts in relation to the colour of undershorts/tights?

The Laws should be relevant to modern football and as shorts are now being designed with a different colour lower edge (hem) it is now clear that the undershorts/tights can be the colour of the shorts or the hem, but the whole team must wear the same colour.

This does NOT apply to shirts - the colour of the undershirts must be the same colour as the main colour of the sleeve as this is important for detecting offences such as handball.

Q4: Why can a player return during play after changing equipment?

It was widely regarded as unfair that a player who has gone off the field of play to change boots, shorts, shirt etc... and has been checked by one of the match officials has to wait for play to stop before being allowed to return to the field; this does not happen for

a player returning after an injury. Allowing the player to return (after the check) during play removes an 'unfair' situation which is often a source of conflict between players and officials; however, the player must wait for a signal to re-enter from the referee.

05 The Referee

Q1: Why has reference to 'left the field of play at the end of the half' been added to when a referee can no longer change a decision?

This is because there have been examples of referees during half-time wrongly changing a decision made just before the whistle top end the half (because it was claimed that play had not restarted).

Q2: Why can a referee now send a player off before the kick-off?

This brings the Law up to date by giving the referee the authority to send a player off before the match for serious misconduct such as that committed in the pre-match warm up on the field of play or lining up in the tunnel pre-match, instead of only reporting the misconduct. For example, if two players had a fight pre-match would be bad for the image of the game and would be a threat to behaviour on the field if they were allowed to play in the match.

Q3: Why can a referee send off (RC) but not caution (YC) a player before kick-off?

Red card offences are serious and players who commit such offences should not play in the match but it would become complicated if a caution (YC) could be given pre-match as people would not know that a player has a caution (YC) when the match starts. It is better that these offences are reported.

Q4: The Law was changed many years ago to ban treatment on the field to stop players behaving unfairly by pretending to be injured to break the flow of the game, waste time etc... Why has this now changed?

The IFAB does not want to return to former times when such behaviour occurred but it is also unfair that when a player is injured as a result of a challenge punished by a caution (YC) /sending-off (RC) and the injured player has to leave the field of play, the offending team benefits from having a numerical advantage. This change is an attempt to achieve a 'fair play' balance but the treatment/assessment must be quick otherwise the player will have still to go off.

Q5: Why do the Laws refer to 'spirit of the game'?

Referees should apply the Laws of the Game correctly but with sensitivity and common sense to create a positive atmosphere on the field of play. It is very important that referees officiate in a way which benefits the game and is in 'sympathy' with the emotions and requirements of each match, no matter what the level. At the lowest levels of football, the referees must use 'common sense' when deciding if a match goes ahead if there is a (minor) problem with the field of play or the equipment. The IFAB believes

that the referee should try to play a match unless there is a risk or danger to the participants.

Q6: Why was the Law relating to several offences occurring at the same time changed? The 'old' Law said that if several players commit an offence at the same time the restart is a dropped ball. However, football would find it very strange if, as a player handles the ball, the opponent commits a serious foul and, after the referee has sent off the offending player, play restarts with a dropped ball.

Football would expect, and it is common-sense, that when several offences occur at the same time, the most serious is penalised. Deciding which offence is the most serious will depend on:

- **Disciplinary sanction** – e.g. sending-off offence (RC) is more serious than a cautionable (YC) offence
- **Restart** – a direct free kick offence is more serious than an indirect free kick offence
- **Nature of the foul** – a foul tackle is more serious than handball or shirt pulling
- **Tactical impact** – an offence which stops an opponent's attack is more important than one which ends a player's own team attack

Q7: Why has the referee's equipment been listed?

This is to make it clear what equipment a referee must use and what equipment the national FA may allow the referee to use. It is also important to make it clear that any electronic equipment not mentioned in Law 5 can NOT be used e.g. cameras and microphones (except the referee team's communication system).

Q8: Why has another advantage signal been added?

Many referees have said that it is not easy to run with both arms extended - this has been confirmed by athletics coaches - so referees now have the option to show advantage with one arm.

06 The Other Match Officials

Q1: What is the correct position for an assistant referee at a penalty kick when there are AARs?

The AAR is positioned on the goal line to observe the movement of the goalkeeper and to judge whether or not the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, so the AR takes a position in line with the ball (on the penalty mark) as this is the offside line. If the ball rebounds from the goalkeeper or the goalposts/crossbar, the AR is in position to judge any offside which may then occur.

07 The Duration of the Match

Q1: Why have medical/drinks breaks been added to the list of reasons for allowing additional time at the end of a half?

This is because there is medical evidence that in some weather conditions it is very important for players to drink fluids regularly. Reference to these breaks in Law 7 means that competitions can include medical drinks breaks in their rules.

08 The Start and Restart of Play

Q1: Can the kick-off be kicked backwards?

YES - the kick-off can now be kicked in any direction and referees are now expected to stop a player of the team taking the kick-off standing in the opponents' half as this is now not necessary.

Q2: What does **clearly** moves mean?

There is a growing 'fair play' problem where, especially at a corner kick, a player just touches the ball and then unfairly pretends/acts as if the ball is not in play so that a team-mate can then go and dribble the ball towards the penalty area.

The Law now states that if the ball does not CLEARLY move it is not in play; if it does CLEARLY move then it is in play and the opponents may move within 9.15m and play or challenge for the ball.

Q3: Why are referees not allowed to 'manufacture' a dropped ball?

The wording makes it clear that the referee has no authority to decide who can challenge for a dropped ball and/or where the dropped ball is to be kicked. If, for 'fair play' reasons, the players agree who will kick the ball and where they will kick it, the referee can agree but it must come from the players – it can not be an instruction from the referee as a dropped ball is a 'neutral' restart which is supposed to be 'fair' for both teams.

09 The Ball In and Out of Play

Q1: Is the ball in play if it rebounds off an assistant referee or AAR?

The match officials are part of the game and if the ball hits any match official and has not wholly passed over the goal line or touchline then it remains 'in play' – this is true not just for the referee but also for assistant referees and AARs (even if they are off the field of play) as it whether the ball wholly left the field of play that must be judged.

10 Determining the Outcome of a Match

Q1: Why do the Laws now say that the referee must toss a coin to decide which goal to use for Kicks From the Penalty Mark (KFPM)?

It is not easy for the referee to decide which goal to choose especially if one end has one set of supporters and the other end the other supporters. When there are no other considerations (safety, ground conditions etc...) tossing a coin is the best 'fair play' method and is consistent with deciding which ends the teams will attack at the start of the match. This practice was already used by sensible referees.

Q2: Why must both teams have the same number of players throughout the KFPM and not just at the start?

If one team has 10 players and the other team has 11 players, the team with 10 has a benefit if KFPM go to an 11th kick because the team with 10 players will have their best kicker take a 2nd kick against the other team's 11th (worst) player. This principle used to apply only before KFPM started but it is logical that it continues throughout KFPM. It applies if a team 'loses' a player because of injury or illness as well as if a player is sent off.

Q3: Why doesn't the referee need to know the order of the kickers and their numbers before the KFPM start?

The order in which players take a kick is the tactical responsibility of the teams. The referee's responsibility is to make sure that no player takes a 2nd kick before every other team member has taken their 1st kick.

Q4: Can an injured player who is off the field of play being treated at the final whistle take part in KFPM?

Yes – any player who is temporarily off the field for a valid reason (injury, changing equipment etc...) is allowed to take part in KFPM. However, a substitution can not be made after the final whistle.

Q5: When is a kick from the penalty mark completed (over) during KFPM and can the kicker score from a rebound or save?

A KFPM is over when the ball stops moving (including being held by the goalkeeper) or goes out of play or if there is an offence by the kicker. The wording was revised because it was unclear, for example, when a goalkeeper partly saved the ball and the ball carried on moving towards the goal whether it was still 'in play'.

As the Law says that each player takes a kick this means that the kicker can not play the ball a second time (even if it rebounds from the goalpost, crossbar or goalkeeper).

Q6: When can a goalkeeper be replaced and who can replace the goalkeeper?

The goalkeeper can be replaced at any time. The replacement can be one of the players who is allowed to take a kick, a substitute (if the team has not used its maximum number of substitutes) or a player who was excluded from KFPM to make the number of players in each team equal. A goalkeeper who is replaced by one of the other kickers, may take a kick but if the goalkeeper is replaced by a substitute or excluded player, the goalkeeper can not take a kick.

Q7: What should the referee do if a player wants to leave the field of play during KFPM?

The player must be warned there will be no delay and to return in time to take a kick (i.e. by the time all the rest of the team have taken a kick) or their kick will be recorded as a miss/not scored. This is because there is a risk of players leaving the field of play for unfair reasons e.g. getting tactical instructions from the coach, delaying the kicks to put pressure on the opponents or even for match-fixing.

11 Offside

Q1: Can a player on the halfway line be offside?

NO – the halfway line is ‘neutral’ for offside – a player has to be in the opponents’ half to be in an offside position.

Q2: Are a player’s arms/hands considered as part of the player’s body when judging offside?

The hands or arms are not included when judging offside position; this is true for all players, including the goalkeepers. This view is supported by and helps assistant referees throughout the world as it is often difficult to identify the exact position of the hands and arms.

Q3: The Law now says that the IDFK for offside can be taken in the player’s own half but how can this be correct?

It is correct because:

- a player CAN NOT be in an offside POSITION in their own half
- a player CAN commit an offside OFFENCE in their own half if they go back into their own half from an offside position

With the exception of offences in the goal area, throughout the Laws every free kick is awarded from the place where the offence occurs, so it is logical that this should also apply to offside.

Q4: Can a player who interferes with play after a rebound or save be given offside?

YES – interfering with an opponent or play after a rebound or save is clearly an offside offence if the player was originally in an offside position.

Q5: For how long is a defending player who goes off the field of play during an opponents' attack technically on the goal line for offside?

It is unfair that a defender who goes off the field of play (often through injury) remains 'active' on the goal line until play next stops as play can continue for a long time. The new wording makes it clear that once the defending team has played the ball towards the halfway line and it is outside their penalty area, that 'phase of play' has ended and the defender is no longer 'active' for offside. This will require alertness from assistant referees and good communication between the referee and assistant.

Q6: How can an attacking player gain a non-offside advantage when returning to the field of play?

The player could come back onto the field of play without the other team being aware and then receive a pass or make a challenge.

If the player is penalised for offside no advantage has been gained so there is no need for a caution (YC).

Q7: Can an attacking player in the goal net be penalised for offside?

Yes, if the player commits an offside offence.

12 Fouls and Misconduct

Q1: If an offence involves contact can it be an indirect free kick?

NO – if an offence (including dangerous play) involves contact with the opponent it must be penalised with a direct free kick.

Q2: If the referee plays advantage for a sending-off offence (including a second caution) and the offending player then gets involved in the game, why is it an IDFK?

The previous wording meant that if a player committed a sending-off offence but the opponents had a good scoring opportunity, the referee could play advantage. However, the player was not sent off until play next stopped which meant the player could score a goal, or stop a goal. This is clearly unfair as the player should not be on the field of play to do this. The Law now requires the referee to stop play and send the player off as soon as the player becomes involved – the restart is an IDFK unless the player commits a direct free kick offence. This applies for 'direct' sending-off (RC) offences and for a second caution (YC).

Q3: Why has the wording for a caution (YC) for handball changed?

Some referees were interpreting every handball as 'denying the opponents possession' so every handball was punished with a caution (YC) - this was not the intention of the Law. Where a handball affects the opponents it should be judged like a foul – if it stops or interferes with a promising attack then it is a caution (YC).

Q4: How can an offence be violent conduct if no contact is made?

In Law 12 'attempts to kick' and 'attempts to strike' are offences – so attempted offences should be punished. Just because a player avoids an opponent's punch or violent kick it does not mean that the violent action is not serious. Attempted violence must be punished as a sending-off (RC) offence as it has no place in football.

Q5: Why is striking/hitting someone's head or face (when not challenging for the ball) regarded as violent conduct?

There has always been an expectation from football that someone who deliberately hits someone on the head or face should be sent off – striking the head or face is potentially very dangerous so unless there is very little force used, this will be a sending-off (RC) as football must discourage this unacceptable behaviour.

Q6: Why is an offence against someone who is not an opponent now a direct free kick? Does this include dissent/offensive language?

If, for example, a player strikes a team-mate, substitute, team official or, perhaps even worse, a match official this is serious but only restarting with an IDFK suggested that the offence was not serious so it is now a direct free kick for any offence (directly) against anyone (except an opponent). This does not include dissent/offensive language etc. as this is not a direct/physical offence against a person (see below).

Q7: What is the restart of the referee stops play for dissent/offensive language etc.? If the referee stops play to penalise a player for dissent/offensive language etc. the restart is an IDFK.

Q8: Why can a free kick be awarded for an offence which takes place off the field of play? Imagine two players fall off the field of play as part of 'normal' play and one player holds the other to prevent them getting back onto the field to get the ball. Everyone would agree when the referee stops play and gives a caution (YC) but no one would agree if the game was restarted with a dropped ball. Giving a free kick on the nearest boundary line to the offence is what football expects; if this position is inside the offender's penalty area it will be a penalty kick.

Q9: Why was the 'triple punishment' for denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO) offences changed for offences in the penalty area?

The main reason is that the award of a penalty kick effectively 'restores' the obvious goal-scoring opportunity that was denied by the foul. It was felt that a penalty, red card and suspension (the three/triple punishment) was too strong so the red card has become a caution (YC) but only for DOGSO offences which are an attempt to play the ball or challenge an opponent for the ball.

Q10: Is every DOGSO offence in the penalty now only a caution (YC)?

NO – the Law has only changed for those DOGSO offences in the penalty area where the offender makes an attempt to play the ball or challenge an opponent for the ball. The sending-off (RC) remains for:

- handball
- holding, pulling and pushing (as these offences are not an attempt to play the ball)
- making no attempt to play the ball e.g. a deliberate trip
- an offence when there was no chance/possibility of the ball being played

Q11: Can a DOGSO offence outside the penalty area be punished with a caution (YC)?

NO – unlike a penalty kick, a free kick is not an obvious chance to score a goal so it does not ‘restore’ the obvious goal-scoring opportunity that was denied by the offence - the disciplinary sanction for all DOGSO offences outside the penalty area remains a sending-off (RC).

Q12: If a player commits a DOGSO offence punished by an indirect free kick (IDFK) in the penalty area what is the disciplinary sanction?

The change relating to DOGSO offences is only when the referee awards a penalty kick. This is because the penalty kick effectively restores the lost obvious goal-scoring opportunity. As an IDFK does not restore the lost obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the sanction for any DOGSO offence resulting in an IDFK is a sending-off (RC).

13 Free Kicks

Q1: What is the difference between ‘preventing’ a free kick and ‘intercepting’ a free kick? When an opposing player who is close to a free kick stops the kick being taken this must be sanctioned with a caution (YC). However, if a player decides to take a free kick quickly, when an opponent is less than 9.15m away and, after the kick has been taken, the opponent gets possession of the ball (even though less than 9.15 away) this is allowed as the player took a risk by taking the free kick quickly.

14 The Penalty Kick

Q1: When is a penalty kick completed (over)?

The penalty kick is completed (over) when the ball stops moving (including being held by the goalkeeper) or goes out of play or if the referee stops play.

Q2: Why is illegal feinting by the penalty kicker an IDFK even when the player scores?

A player who deliberately stops at the end of their run and then feints to gain an advantage is deliberately breaking the Law. This is an act of deliberate unsporting behaviour so, as well as the caution (YC), the player does not deserve to have a second

chance to score. This stronger punishment should deter an offence which is sometimes difficult to detect.

Q3: Why must the goalkeeper who infringes the Law at a penalty kick and causes the kick to be retaken, be cautioned (YC)?

If the goalkeeper moves early (or infringes in any other way) this can directly affect the outcome of the penalty kick so introducing a caution (YC) is consistent with the increased punishment for the kicker and should deter goalkeepers from moving early.

Q4: Why is it not a caution (YC) for players who encroach early?

If the kicker or goalkeeper infringes the Law their illegal action can directly affect the outcome of the penalty kick but encroachment does not directly affect the outcome of the penalty kick so is not as serious.

Q5: Why is it an IDFK if the ball is kicked backwards?

The Law requires the ball to be kicked forward – if it is not then the procedure has been broken and, as a goal has not been scored an IDFK is awarded. If a ‘goal’ is scored from a shot after the penalty kick went backwards this is not a re-take as the ‘goal’ was not scored directly from the penalty kick.

15 The Throw-in

Q1: Why has the wording about the hands been changed?

The Law has been reworded to emphasise that the ball must be thrown by BOTH hands so throwing the ball with one hand and using the other hand just to ‘guide’ the direction of the throw is not permitted.

16 The Goal Kick

Q1: Why is the word ‘stationary’ highlighted as a change to Law 16?

This was one of the strangest discoveries when The IFAB started the revision work as the old wording did not say anywhere that the ball had to be stationary (not moving) for a goal kick. We think this omission occurred many years ago when it was decided, to stop time-wasting, that the goal kick could be taken from anywhere in the goal area.

Q2: Why is the goal kick retaken if an attacking player who was in the penalty area when the goal kick was taken is the first player to touch the ball outside the penalty area?

This is to prevent the attacking player gaining an advantage from being in the penalty area which is not permitted by Law 16. The player is NOT penalised with a free kick as the goal kick is often taken before the player has had time to leave the penalty area.

17 The Corner Kick

Q1: Why does the Law mention scoring an 'own goal' from a corner kick as that must be almost impossible?

The Laws try to cover all possible situations and there is a (small) chance that on a sloping field in a very strong winds this could happen.