**Basic Rules of Soccer**





**POSITIONS**

Forwards- Front line strikers also known as Attackers

Midfielders- Supports both Defenders and Forwards

Defenders- Protect the Goal area also known as Fullbacks

Goalkeeper- Can use hands also known as Keeper or Goalie

**RULE 1** - No Hands, please

1. The rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of

 the fingers to the shoulder.

1. The proper way to look at this soccer rule is that a player cannot “handle”

the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player’s hand or arm is not a hand ball.

This means that the referee must use his or her own judgment to some extent in

determining whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or a purposeful

attempt to gain an advantage.

1. Put another way, the referee must determine if the play was

Ball to Hand (legal)

or

Hand to Ball (illegal)

1. Believe it or not, there is also a situation in which the goalie cannot use his/her

hands. This is sometimes called the back-pass rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a

pass that came directly from one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper

must use his feet. Infraction of this soccer rule will result in an indirect kick from

the point of the infraction.

**RULE 2** – Start and Restart

1. A kick-off is the way a soccer game is started or restarted:

• at the start of a game

• after a goal has been scored

• at the start of the second half (or each quarter in younger ages)

• at the start of each period of extra time, if used

1. The ball is placed in the center of the field. All players must be in their own half of

the field and the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 10 yards

from the ball. This distance is indicated by the center circle on the field and will vary

some with age.

1. Normally the referee will blow his/her whistle to indicate they are ready for the kickoff.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward. See RULE 3

**RULE 3** - Two-touch Rule

1. A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will

see this called many times in youth soccer. It applies everywhere. You will see it

frequently on kick-offs, corner kicks, or direct and indirect kicks. If a kid barely hits

the ball and decides to take another swipe at it, that is a two-touch violation.

1. This also applies to throw-ins. A kid cannot throw the ball in and then kick it.
2. The only exception to this rule is on a drop ball restart.

**RULE 4 -** Throw-ins

1. A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two

basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to

throw the ball with both hands over the head.

1. To clarify, both feet must be on the ground when the ball is thrown. The player

can hop, run, or do cartwheels up to the point where the ball is released but not

when the ball is released. Dragging the toes of one foot **Is Considered Legal**.

**RULE 5** - Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks

1. A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across a goal line

– you know, either end of the field with a goal.

1. If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. If the defensive

team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick.

1. The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the “goalie box” as it is affectionately

called. It can be taken by any player, not just the goalkeeper.

1. The corner kick is taken from – yes, you guessed it – the corner nearest to where

the ball left the field.

1. You may be confused at times in youth soccer games to see a goal kick retaken.

This is because the FIFA soccer rules state that the ball is not back “in play” until it

leaves the penalty area, the large box outside of the “goalie box” (see diagram if

needed). If either team touches the ball before it leaves the penalty area the kick

must be retaken, and if the ball is not kicked well enough to leave the area, the

kick must be retaken.

**RULE 6** - Direct and Indirect Free Kicks

1. Direct and indirect kicks are two primary ways that play is restarted after the

referee stops play for an infraction.

1. For both of these the ball must be stationary before it is kicked and the opposing

players should be a minimum of 10 yards away. The 10 yard allowance is often

reduced for the smaller age groups and is left up to the discretion of the referee.

1. The simple difference between the two is this: On a direct kick you can score by

kicking the ball directly into the goal. On an indirect kick you cannot score. An

indirect kick must be touched by another player before it can go into the goal –

that is the kicker and a second person.

1. As a parent on the sideline, you can tell whether the kick is direct or

indirect by looking at the referee. For an indirect kick, the referee will

hold one arm straight up in the air until the second person touches the

ball. No arm up, it’s a direct kick.

1. There are many soccer rules around what causes a direct or indirect kick.

In general, a direct kick comes from a contact foul or hand ball. Everything else is

indirect.

**RULE 7** - Penalty Kick

1. A penalty kick results from a contact foul or hand ball by the defending team within

the penalty area – the large box on either end of the field.

1. The ball is placed on the penalty spot or mark, front of the center of

the goal. See diagram

1. All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball

is kicked. The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is

kicked.

1. If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the keeper and stays on the field, the

ball is “live” and anyone can play it.

1. If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the goal and stays on the field, the ball

is “live” and anyone can play it with the exception of the person who just

kicked the ball. If the ball rebounds off of the goal and back into play, the person

who kicked the ball cannot play it until the ball is touched by another player –

otherwise he/she will be called for two touches.

**RULE 8** - Fouls and Punishment

1. The common rule of thumb on fouls is “If it looks like a foul, it probably is.”

Too true. A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at

an opponent.

1. So what’s the problem?

Soccer can be a physical, contact sport when two opposing players both want the

soccer ball and no parent or grandparent likes it when little Susie loses the ball

and ends up on the ground!

**“Foul!” cries the parent. “Little Susie was pushed!”**

What you need to know as a parent is that bumping or going shoulder-to-shoulder

while competing for a ball is not a foul until the hands or elbows come up. This is a

bit of a judgment call and not all referees will call it the same way. Some soccer

rules are actually not black-and-white.

Remember though, the referee is ALWAYS right.

1. The normal consequence of a foul is a direct kick for the opposing team.

However, depending on the type of foul and severity, the playing “dishing it out”

may be punished.

1. Punishment is given in soccer with **yellow and red cards**. The FIFA soccer rules

give the guidelines for when to give a yellow card to a player and when to give a

red card. I’m not going to get into the specifics here.

If a player is given two yellow cards in the same game, that is equal to a red card.

A red card can be given at any time without the player first receiving a yellow card.

When a player gets a red card, they must leave the game and their team must

play short. An ejected player cannot be replaced (unless they are ejected prior to

the start of the game).

**RULE 9** - Offside

* I decided to leave the best for last.

This is without a doubt the least understood rule by parents and coaches alike.

 There’s a good chance that this rule won’t be called for the U-8 or younger teams. You may be off the hook for now.

However, if you are a U-8 or U-6 coach you still need to know this rule so you can

begin teaching your players not to be offside.

1. The first thing to know is that you cannot be offside on a corner kick, goal kick, or

throw-in. Don’t ask me why. Just accept it and go on. The explanation is too long.

1. Also, it is not an offense for a player to be in an offside position. The player must

be involved in active play as determined by the referee to be called offside.

As quoted from the FIFA soccer rules:

1. A player is in an offside position if: he is nearer to his opponents’ goal line than

both the ball and the second last opponent.

Clear yet? I didn’t think so.

1. Try this. An offensive or attacking player can’t be ahead of the ball and involved in

the play unless there is a defender between him and the goalkeeper. Or, you can’t

hang out at the other team’s goal waiting for the ball.

A few other buts.

1. You can’t be offside if you are standing on your half of the field. Also, the offside

rule applies when the ball is kicked, not when the player receives the ball.

To accurately judge offside, one has to stay even with the second-to-last defender

and not watch the ball. Listen for the kick of the ball and judge at the time of the

kick whether or not the player was offside.

To be honest with you, this can be a hard rule to understand. Don’t get too hung

up on it. Trust the referees.