

Laws of the Game

Without attempting to provide you with all of the rules of play, let us make an effort to acquaint you with the rules which govern illegal contact and offsides.

(1) The Offside Rule: A player is in an "offside" position if she is:

- (a) ahead of the ball (closer to the opponent's goal line than the ball is), and
- (b) in the opponent's half of the field, and
- (c) there are fewer than two opponents ahead of or even with her. (A player is offside if she is even with the second to last opponent.)

A player in the offside position, described above, may be declared offside if she either:

- (a) participates in play, or
- (b) interferes with an opponent, or
- (c) otherwise tries to take advantage of her offside position.

The position of the player at the moment the ball is played by a teammate determines whether she is offside. For example, if she were positioned offside at the moment the ball was passed by a teammate, she does not become offside if she runs to an offside position while the ball is in flight.

Exceptions: A player in an offside position is not declared offside if:

- (a) the ball is last played by an opponent; or
- (b) she receives the ball directly from a throw-in, corner kick, or goal kick.

If a player is declared offside, an indirect free kick is taken by the opposing team from the position of the offside player.

(2) Penal Fouls: There are nine penal fouls which, in order to be judged foul, must be committed intentionally:

- (a) kicking or trying to kick an opponent;
- (b) tripping an opponent;
- (c) jumping at an opponent;
- (d) charging an opponent violently or dangerously (that is, where either the charging player or the charged player could be hurt);
- (e) charging an opponent from behind [Exception: an opponent who legally obstructs (screens the ball from an opponent while the ball is within playing distance) may be charged fairly from behind (shoulder to shoulder blade), if done safely];
- (f) hitting, trying to hit, or spitting at an opponent;
- (g) holding an opponent;
- (h) pushing an opponent;
- (i) handling the ball, except by a goalkeeper in her own penalty area [Note: handball is a foul when a player touches the ball with any part of his hand or arm while intending to control the ball.]

When a penal foul is committed, the opposing team is awarded a direct free kick, or a penalty kick, if the foul takes place in the penalty area.

(3) Non-Penal Fouls: There are five non-penal fouls:

- (a) dangerous play, such as high kicking near another player's head or trying to play a ball held by a goalkeeper [Note: If a player puts herself in danger, the referee may call dangerous play against that player];
- (b) fair charging (shoulder to shoulder contact without danger to either player) but with the ball out of playing distance (more than about one step away);
- (c) illegal obstruction, i.e., a player intentionally putting herself between the ball and an opponent, when not within playing distance of the ball, to stop the opponent from playing the ball. [Note: the goalkeeper must not be obstructed when attempting to put the ball into play];
- (d) charging the goalkeeper in her goal area when she is neither holding the ball nor legally obstructing an opponent;
- (e) a goalkeeper:
 - (1) taking more than four steps while controlling the ball with her hands [Note: steps taken while trying to bring the ball under control are not counted], or
 - (2) releasing the ball into play, then handling the ball again before another player touches it, or
 - (3) controlling the ball with her hands when intentionally passed back from the foot of a teammate, or
 - (4) otherwise wasting time.

When a non-penal foul is committed, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick. REMEMBER, HOWEVER, the referee may not stop play to punish a foul if, in his opinion, the fouled team is better off if he allows play to continue. This is called the "advantage clause."