

Rules of the Game

V. 2026



Equipment

What is required

Players are required to have shinguards and soccer socks that cover the shinguards
Team jersey

What is allowed

Players may wear track/athletic pants
Players may wear hoodies or jackets under their jerseys
Players may wear a toque
The only jewelry allowed in medically based
Players may wear soccer cleats (no metal studs)

What isn't allowed

Players may not wear ball caps (unless they are the goalie)
Players may not wear jewelry; no earring, no necklaces, no bracelets of any kind
Players may not wear clothing with offensive language or symbols

The Game

The game is split into two halves, the length of which is dependent upon level, as below, separated by a 5 minute half time break. Games end in ties and there is no overtime or penalty shootout to decide the final outcome.

The number of players on the field is also level dependent, as per the table below.

Division	U9	U11	U13	U15	U19
Game Duration	Two 25 minute halves	Two 30 minute halves	Two 35 minute halves	Two 40 minute halves	Two 45 minute halves
Players on the field	6 plus goalie	8 plus goalie	8 plus goalie	10 plus goalie	10 plus goalie

Games will be directed by referees. Referees are in charge of all aspects of the field from the time they arrive until the time they leave.

Before each game the referee will perform an equipment check on the players to ensure they are following the rules above.

The referee will call for captains and toss a coin to determine kick-off order and zones defended to start the game.

Kick off

Each half is started with a **kick off**, with each team starting in their side of half as determined by the **coin toss**.

The team taking the starting kick may have players anywhere on their side of half including inside the centre circle. The player taking the kick may be on the opposing team's side of half.

The team defending the kick off must be on their side of half and none of their players may be inside the centre circle.

The team which defends the kick off in the first half gets the kick off in the second half, with the teams switching ends.

The referee will check that the right number of players are on the field and blow their whistle to start the match.

When the ball is kicked and visibly moves, it is in play. The player who kicked the ball may not touch it again until it has touched another player. The ball may be kicked in any direction at the kick off and a goal can be scored directly from the kick off.

Stoppages in play

The game can be stopped for many reasons, as listed below, and the method of restart depends on the reason for the stoppage. The game will stop after a goal is scored, if the ball goes out of bounds, if a player is injured or the ball hits the referee, or if a foul is committed.

In soccer changing players on the field with players on the sidelines is called a **substitution**. Substitutions may only happen during a stoppage in play; substitutions are not permitted while the ball is in play.

To call for a substitution, at a stoppage in play, the coach can yell "Subs" or "Substitution" to get the referees attention. Coaches must have the referees permission to make changes; the referee should raise their arm to indicate to the players that the play will remain stopped to indicate to the coach that changes can be made. The referee might also call out "Subs in" for example. The play may not resume until the referee lowers their arm.

Goal being scored

A goal is scored when the ball fully crosses the end/goal line, between the posts and under the cross bar of the net. After a goal is scored, the team that scored will defend a kick off from the team that was scored against, using the same rules as described previously for the kick off.

Throw ins

When the ball goes out of bounds along the touchline or sidelines, the play is started by a **throw-in**. The throw in is awarded to the team that did not touch the ball last before it went out of bounds.

Proper throw-in technique includes **the player being behind or touching the touchline, both feet making contact with the ground in some fashion, hands starting behind the head and moving over the head before the ball is released and the player facing in the direction that the ball is being thrown**. The throw-in is taken from the point where the ball completely crossed the touchline.

If the throw-in is taken correctly but ends up going out of bounds again before any other player touches the ball, the throw-in is retaken by the same team.

The team defending the throw-in must be **2 meters** away from the player taking the throw.

The player taking the throw may not touch the ball a second time until it is touched by another player.

A goal MAY NOT be scored directly from a throw-in. If the ball directly enters the opponents net, a goal kick is awarded; if it directly enters the net of the throwing team, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

If a player taking the throw-in performs the restart incorrectly (lifts a foot, throws with one hand, jumps, etc), then:

- **U9** - the referee will blow the whistle, explain to the player the mistake they made and allow the player to retry until they get it correct
- **U11/U13** - the referee will blow the whistle, explain to the player the mistake they made and allow the player to retry. This retry should only happen once per game per player. If they make a mistake on their retry, the ball goes to the opponent to restart play via throw-in
- **U15/U19** - the referee will blow the whistle, explain to the player the mistake they made and the ball goes to the opponent to restart play via throw-in

Drop ball

If play has to be stopped, for reasons such as an injured player, the ball hitting the referee, an extra ball coming onto the field, etc. the play is restarted with a **drop ball**. The majority of drop balls are uncontested; meaning that the ball is dropped to a player of the team that had possession of the ball at the time that the play was stopped. When the ball is dropped, the ball is in play.

The drop ball is the only restart in soccer where the player restarting play may touch the ball a second time without it touching another player.

Corner kicks

When the ball goes fully over the end/goal line (without being a goal) AND was last touched by a defending player, a **corner kick** is awarded to the attacking team at the corner closest to where the ball went out of play.

For a corner kick, the defending team must be 10m away from the ball.

Once the ball is touched and visibly moves, the ball is considered to be in play. The player who took the corner kick may not touch the ball a second time, until after the ball touches another player.

A goal may be scored directly off a corner kick.

Players from the attacking team can not be offside directly from the corner kick as the ball is as far forward as it may travel. However, once the ball is touched a second time, players can be in an offside position.

If the ball goes out of bounds off a corner kick, a goal kick is awarded to the team defending the corner kick,

Goal kicks

When the ball goes fully over the end/goal line (without being a goal) AND was last touched by an attacking player, a **goal kick** is awarded to the defending team. The goal kick can be taken from anywhere inside the goal area (the small box in front of the net).

The goal kick can be taken by ANY player on the defending team.

Players from the defending team can be inside the penalty area (the large box in front of the net) but the attacking team must be outside the penalty area. When the ball is touched and visibly moves, the ball is considered to be in play; the player who kicked the goal kick may not touch the ball again until after it touches another player.

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick.

Indirect and direct free kicks & Fouls

When a call is made on the field for a foul or offside the game is restarted with a free kick, either indirect or direct, depending on the situation.

The team defending the kick must remain 10 meters away from the ball and may set up a wall to defend. The only time when the 10 meter rule is not in effect would be if an indirect kick is awarded near to the goal in which case the defending team must be as far from the ball as possible but still remaining on the field (more below)

If a **direct free kick** is called, the team awarded the kick may score directly from the kick. A direct free kick offence occurring in the penalty area, would result in a **penalty shot/kick**.

For a penalty shot:

- The ball is placed at the penalty mark
- The goalie must have at least part of one foot touching the goal line
- Aside from the shooter and the goalie, all players from both teams must be outside the penalty area and penalty arc.
- The ball must be kicked in a forward direction.
- When the ball visibly moves, it is considered in play; other players may enter the penalty area at this time
- The player who took the shot may not touch the ball a second time until after another player has touched the ball. If they do, an indirect free kick is awarded to the other team

If an **indirect free kick** is called, the team awarded the kick can not score directly from the kick; the ball must touch at least one other player, from either team, before entering the goal. If a goal is scored directly from an indirect free kick, the team defending the kick will be awarded a goal kick (the ball has crossed the end/goal line).

A general list of **fouls** that result in either a direct or indirect free kick, some of which can result in a yellow or red card.

Direct Free Kick		Indirect Free Kick	
Hand ball	Impeding player progress WITH contact	Goalie hand ball inside penalty area	Impeding player progress WITHOUT contact
Kicks, trips, jumps into, charges, strikes, pushes or tackles an opponent	Holding an opponent	Offside	Dangerous play without contact
Spitting at someone or biting	Throwing an object at the ball, an opponent or referee	Dissent towards referee	Preventing goalie from releasing the ball
Using a hand held object to make contact with the ball		Foul/offensive language or gestures	Distracts player resulting in stoppage of play

Advantage

If a foul is committed, the referee has the option of allowing play to continue, giving **advantage**, if the player who was fouled or a teammate gains and maintains control of the ball. If the foul would have resulted in a card (yellow or red) being given, the referee would hand out that card at the next stoppage in play.

Offsides

Reminder: a player can not be called for offside if in an offside position if receiving the ball directly from a throw-in, goal kick or corner kick.

The basis on the offside rule is that a **player is in an offside position** at the time the ball is played if they are:

- Ahead of the ball
- In the other teams end of half
- Closer to the opponents end/goal line than the second last defender (the goalie counts as a defender)

An offside is called if the player in the offside position:

- receives a pass from a teammate
- Challenges for a ball immediately from the offside position
- Gains advantage by being in an offside position

An example of gaining advantage from being in an offside position would be a player who is in an offside position gets the ball after the goalie has made a save and the ball is deflected to that player.

In **U9** soccer our referees will call offsides when the player is cherry picking; if a team is winning by a large margin, offsides will be called closer.

In **U11 through U19**, referees will call offsides to the best of their abilities and explain to the players why they were offside.

We will try to get some examples of offsides with images onto our website.

Goalie saves

While not a stoppage in play, goalie saves need to be considered to differentiate from goal kicks. Remember a goal kick happens after the ball has gone out of play, while a goalie save means that the ball is still in play.

The goalie is the only player on the field that may use their hands to control the ball, but there are rules governing this:

- The goalie may only use their hand if they are within the penalty area **AND**
- If the ball has not been passed intentionally to them by a team mate using the lower portion of the body (kick or knee for examples)
- The goalie may only have control of the ball in their hands for 8 seconds
- The goalie is not considered to have control of the ball with their hands if it is a save; more so when they pick up the ball

While the goalie has control of the ball with their hands, opposing players may NOT try to kick the ball out of the goalkeeper's hands.

If the goalie has control of the ball with their hands and places the ball on the ground, the ball is considered to be in play and fair game for any player on the field. If the goalie picks up the ball again, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team.

If the goalie uses their hands on the ball when the ball has been deliberately passed back to them by a teammate who used their legs to make the pass, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team.

If a goalie uses their hands outside the penalty area, they are treated the same as any other player on the field and a direct free kick will be awarded to the opposing team at the point of the infraction.

Yellow and red cards

The referee may show a player a caution (**yellow card**) or ejection (**red card**) due to actions on the field. If a player is ejected from the game, their team must play the remaining portion of the game short one player for each red card issued. Additionally a player who receives a red card will be given a minimum one game suspension depending on their actions.

PYSA does not want to have to suspended but will do so to ensure the safety of all players

Referees can give coaches red and yellow cards for their actions; they may card players on the sidelines and may hand out cards before and after the final whistle.

Here are the actions that can and should result in a **yellow card (caution)** being issued.

unsportsmanlike behaviour	dissent	persistent infringement of the laws	delaying restarts of the game
failure to respect required distances	Reckless play	entering or leaving field without the referees permission	

Unsportsmanlike behaviour - any action deemed to be unsporting. Examples would include:

- Celebrating a goal directly in front of the opponents player bench
- Running up to an opponent after a goal and telling them they suck
- Yelling at the opponents goal about how they are bad
- Verbally distracting another player, such as chasing another player and screaming

Dissent - verbally or physically questioning or mocking the calls made by the referee

Persistent infringements of the laws of the game - a player who is frequently committing the same foul repeatedly can be given a yellow card. For example, a hand ball does not result in a yellow card, but if a player is frequently using their hands to stop the other team from advancing or to allow their own team to get back to defend, that player should be given a yellow card for persistent infringements of the laws of the game.

Delaying restarts - if a player performs some action to delay the restart of a game. Examples would include:

- The ball has rolled out of bounds and the player runs to the ball and kicks it further from the sidelines
- A player leaves the field slowly during a substitution and ignores the referees request to hustle off the field

Failure to respect required distances - A player that does not respect the required distances for restarts of the game can be given a yellow card. For most restarts, defending players need to be 10m away from the ball in all directions; for throw-ins the distance is 2m. If a defending player sets themselves up well inside that distance, for example standing directly in front of the ball when the referee calls for a free kick, a yellow card should be given.

Reckless play - should a player commit a foul in a reckless manner (the referee feels the player acted with disregard to the potential danger and consequences of their action) a yellow card can be given. An example of this would be a player jumping into a stationary player who is under the ball in the air, once again, with the intent as viewed by the referee.

Entering or leaving the field without the permission of the referee - PYSA does not enforce this rule as many of our players, coaches and parents do not understand it and in recreational soccer, it can just slow down the game.

Here are the actions of a player that should result in a **red card (ejection)** being handed out.

serious foul play	violent conduct	spitting or biting	receiving two cautions in a single match
use of foul or offensive language or gestures		denial of an obvious goal scoring opportunity	

Receiving two cautions in a single game - if a player receives two yellow cards in a single game, the result is a red card ejection. The referee will show the second yellow card and immediately show the red card.

Serious foul play - if a player commits a foul which in the eyes of the referee was using excessive force, a red card can be given. Excessive force is judged by the referee under the definition that a player exceeds the necessary use of force and/or endangers the safety of an opponent. An example would be a player charges another player well after the ball is played and pushes the player to the field.

Violent conduct - The actions of punching, kicking (away from the ball), headbutting, etc. are considered violent conduct and the force behind those actions could result in a red card. A yellow card would be given should player be frustrated and just kicking out and barely makes contact with an opponent (the force was not there but the reckless action would be a yellow card) while a red card would be issued to a player that runs up to another player and kicks them as hard as they can, with no intent on trying to get the ball.

Spitting or biting - Biting another player or spitting on a player is a red card offence.

Use of foul or offensive language or gestures - Any foul language, racial slurs or offensive language should result in a red card. Any offensive gestures such as giving the finger should receive a red card. Our referees have been instructed to give the red card for such actions, but have also been instructed that if they don't feel safe doing so that such actions must be reported to PYSA for the board to discipline.

Denial of an obvious goal scoring opportunity - This rule would cover actions such as taking down a player on a breakaway or reaching out and stopping the ball from going into the goal.

PYSA does not subscribe to the DOGSO (denial of obvious goal scoring opportunity). We have young kids learning the game and do not want them being ejected for not understanding the ramifications of a rule. If implemented, the player gets ejected, their team plays the remainder of the game short one player and a penalty shot is often awarded. Additionally the offending player will receive a minimum one game suspension.

If the act is violent, the player will be getting a red card regardless. What we are talking about is the incidental or reckless push that might stop a goal from happening or the player who instinctively puts their hand up when the ball comes near and stops it from going into the net. PYSA doesn't want to eject these players but wants them to learn the game. In these situations the direct free kick will be awarded (a penalty shot if the action takes place inside the penalty area). The player will still receive a card (yellow or red) if warranted.

Positions

Goalie or Goalkeeper

Goalies are the only players allowed to use their hands (see section on Goalie saves) and are treated like any other player when outside of their own penalty area. A goalkeeper may play in any part of the field and is not limited to their penalty area.

Striker/Forward

This would be your attacking players. They would typically play from just inside their side of half all the way to the opponents goal. These players should be most aware of the offside rule.

Mid-fielder

The midfield player acts as support for both the offence and defence. Their zone would typically be between the two penalty areas though they might be needed deeper into both zones.

Defence

Defence will play the field from their own end/goal line to just past the centre line.

Sweeper

If you use a sweeper, they would be the last line of defence before the goalie. They typically play back from the defence supporting and directing with the hopes of forcing an offside situation.