17 Laws of the Game

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Keep in mind that the laws are put in place for players’ safety as well as helping the game run smoothly and fairly. Not all laws apply to every age group. Main thing is to keep positive and have fun.

The Break Down

**Law 1 Field of play**. There are two major factors that affect the pitch, one is the number of players on the pitch, and two is the age of the players. A soccer pitch has different lines and dimensions depending on the age group of the kids. The lines that run the length of the fields are called the **touch line**. The line that runs along the goal side is the **goal line**. The line that runs through the middle of the pitch is called the **mid-field line**. The **center point** on the mid-field line is where the game begins and the circle around that point is called the **center circle.** The large area is called the **penalty area** or is commonly referred to as the 18. The smaller area is called the **goal area**, or the 6. On u10 fields and up there is a line between the top of penalty area and the top of the goal area called the **PK line**. We will include diagrams for each age group of the pitch. All fields need to be clear of debris, free of holes, and should be well maintained. No holes or missing grass spots should be present. This is for the players’ safety.

* U6 will play 4v4 on a 45x75 field. Mid-field is 37.5 ft, and the penalty line is 6ft off the goal line.
* U8 will play 5v5 on a 75x105 field. Mid-field is 52.5ft, the center point is 37.5, the center circle is 12ft in diameter, and the penalty area is 6ft off the goal line.
* U10 will play 9v9 on a 134x200 field.
* U12 will play 9v9 on a 134x200 field. U10/U12 are set up the same since SWISL uses a combo field.
* U15 will play 11v11 on a 120mx 90m field. Most host towns will use their high school pitch.

**Law 2 the ball.** The ball is determined by the ages of the players, it should be completely inflated, with no rips, tears, or stitches showing to be used as a game ball. Teams can provide a game ball, or the hosting town can have designated balls for games.

* U6 size 3
* U8 size 3
* U10 size 4
* U12 size 4
* U 15 size 5

**Law 3 Numbers of players on the pitch.** The number of players is determined by the size of the pitch along with the age of the players. PLEASE NOTE that a REFEREE should count the player at least two times a game. Once at the beginning and at half. They should also make sure that the same number of subs comes in and out before play resumes. Teams can still play a game with a full field of players (no subs) or a player short. If this does happen the games can be played in quarters instead of halves. We ask that opposing teams respectfully play down to even the playing field. Players that arrive late will need to be checked in by a referee when the ball is considered dead. Ex. when a goal is scored or when the ball is out of bounds across the goal line. The late player can wait by the half flag or in the sub box. Even if your team is playing down the late player must check in prior to entering the pitch. (failure to do so will result in a yellow card)

**Law 4 Players Equipment.** ALL players are required to wear shin guards. THEY WILL NOT be allowed to step onto the field until they have shin guards on. It does not matter about the age of the player; shin guards are important! Socks need to go OVER the shin guards and need to COMPLETELY COVER the shin guards. NO EXCEPTIONS. Jerseys need to be tucked into shorts or pants and always go over long sleeves or sweatshirts if players choose to wear them. Note if a player wears a sweatshirt with a hood, the hood needs to be tucked into the jersey. Please keep sock color and pant color neutral unless the whole team does a wild color. Keepers need to wear a different colored jersey than their team and the opposing team. EX. Atlantic vs Harlan team colors are yellow and red keepers can wear any color except yellow or red. Keeper gloves are optional. Cleats are permitted for any age group; however, they CAN NOT include a toe cleat. Baseball cleats and softball cleats have a toe cleat so please remind parents to buy separate or remove the toe cleat. This is for SAFETY REASONS AND THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS! Referees will check cleats and attire at the beginning of every game in the “line up”. Jewelry, fit bits, watches, clips, barrettes, metal or hard plastic headbands are NOT permitted. I understand that ear piercings are big for young ladies but either they need to wait until after season or if they cannot be takin out, they will not play. Chewing gum and or food is not allowed on the pitch.

**Law 5 The Referee.** Referees CAN NOT see everything and are human. Please take this into consideration. When a ref makes the call that is all there is to it. If you disagree, please consult with a sideline ref, or talk to the Ref at halftime or quarter. We hold a ZERO tolerance for yelling at the refs from parents. We look to coaches to pass this on to your parents. THIS IS YOUR ONLY WARNING. The Ref Coordinator or a present board member will eject any rowdy adults or players. Refs should never entertain the crowd, only the team and coach. When players hear the whistle, it means STOP NOW. This should be stress to ALL age groups. Referees’ WORD IS LAW the moment he or she steps onto the pitch. The center Ref is ALWAYS the lead Ref and will make the majority of the calls. Refs should call to the best of their abilities and don’t forget to use their whistle!

**Law 6 The assistant Referee.** The assistant ref or linesmen oversees subbing, calling offsides, direction of throw-ins, and an extra set of eyes for catching fouls. This is the ref coaches can talk to since they run up and down the sideline. Please keep the sideline clear for them. For subs they should always come to half and stand next to the center flag. A flag strait up in the air to get the center Refs attention is all that is needed.

**Law 7 duration of the match.** Duration is determined by the age group first and field size second. There are no time outs in soccer, the clock runs continuously, refs will add time for penalties, half times, injuries, or when the ref stops the game.

* U6 game is 30mins with 4 quarters 7mins long and a 3 min half.
* U8 game is 40 mins with 2 halves each 20 mins long and a 5 min half.
* U10 game is 50 mins long with 2 halves each 25 mins and has a 10 min half.
* U12 game is 60 mins with 2 halves each 30 mins long and a 10 min half.
* U15 game is 70 mins with 2 halves each 35 mins long and 10 min halftime.

**Law 8 Start and restart of play.** A coin toss will determine the kickoff overseen by the Ref. Winner of the coin toss can either pick the goal to attack or to take the kick off. The ball is always placed in the center of the circle. Refs should ask both keepers if they are ready. (They will do this at half also.) A whistle blow signals the start.

* U6 and U8 kickoff only one player is allowed in the circle, the direction of the ball must go forward, and leave the circle.
* U6 as long as it leaves the circle the kiddos are good to play. Try to keep everyone back.
* U8 players may not cross half until the ball is kicked. The player who kicked off is not allowed to touch the ball a second time until someone else touches it. U8 gets 2 attempts then the opponent gets the kickoff.
* U10 two player can do the kickoff, 1st player may only use a 1 touch and the ball MUST roll forward. 2nd player can touch the ball more than once and the 1st player can touch the ball again as soon as the 2nd player touches it. The 2nd player can dribble or pass in ANY direction. As soon as the ball is touched it becomes a live ball meaning that opponents can enter the circle and teammates can cross the half line.
* U12 is identical to U10
* U15 1st player can do the “first touch” in ANY direction, as long as the only touch it once.

Restarting at half will result both teams switching sides and the opposite team kicks off. U6 for quarter reset play the ball where it lies and continue with a throw-in. Start and restarts are always que with a Refs whistle. If for any reason the Ref stops the game without a foul made the restart will continue with a drop ball. Ex. Player injury or discussion with a sideline ref. Always wait for the whistle to begin.

**Law 9 Ball in and out of play**. The pitch is rectangular in shape any time the ball crosses the line completely this results in an “out” player who touched the ball last is who this is called on. Players can step over the touch or goal line and play the ball as long as the ball stays inside the goal or touchline. Subs may be sent in at any time an “out” occurs. Reminder your subs need to be sent to the half marker so the refs are aware you need a sub. U15 can only sub when the ball is in their possession, or if the opponent is also subbing. Keepers can be subbed at this time or switched during half time.

**Law 10 method of scoring**. Anytime the ball crosses the goal line completely this results in a goal. This includes keepers if they have the ball in their hands! Please work on this in practice, taking 1 step up off the line. U10 keepers will receive 1 warning. U12 will get none. Scores can be done anywhere inside the field and can be done by kicking or headers and if the keeper crosses the goal line. Throw ins must be touched by another player before crossing the goal line to count. Please coaches, teach keepers to yell phrases like “I got it!” or “Mine”. REFS WILL ALWAYS SIDE WITH THE KEEPER for safety reasons. Rule of thumb is if a keeper is down retrieving the ball that offensive players should back off. THIS IS FOR THE KEEPER’S SAFETY! No one wants to get kicked in the face. The keeper MUST give a warning as stated above. Refs use your best judgement on this, if you do call it, the foul will be an indirect kick from location unless you find it aggressive, then it’s a direct kick. Goal sizes that are recommended as follows:

* U6/u8- 4’x6’
* U10/U12- 6 ½’ x 18’
* U15- 7’x21’

**Law 11 Offsides**. This rule is for U10 and up. Offsides is where a player is behind or closer to the goal line than the nearest defensive player and receives the ball. All offensive players must be even with the last defender. Until the ball passes the last defender. This is one of the hardest rules in soccer and one of the most confusing. If you have any questions, please ask and I can demonstrate. This is one you will have to work with the kiddos on. The sideline ref will raise their flag and stand where the foul was committed. Resulting in the defensive team getting an indirect kick.

**Law 12 Fouls and misconduct**. Hand ball is the most common foul. If the ball touches a player from the bottom of the shoulder to the fingertip this is called. We have decided that for protection kids are allowed to cross their arms over their chest for protection this does NOT apply to U15. Arm must be close to their chest and CAN NOT be used to direct the ball. Intentional hand balls result in a direct kick, unintentional results in 1 warning per player from the ref and then an indirect kick. Fouls will always be called unless the foul is considered “Advantage”. Ex. team A fouls with a hand ball but team B received the ball and is in control heading for team A’s goal. Play would not stop considering team B would have the free kick and play would have to be reset to where the foul occurred. This is called advantage. Make sense? Soccer is a contact sport within reason, shoulder to shoulder contact is allowed. Fouls can be called on elbowing, pushing, shoving, tripping, jersey tugging, slide tackles, headers, or rough play. Slide tackles can be used ONLY in U10, U12 and U15 and can only done from the front or side. **Note** player who slide tackles must touch the ball first or it is a tripping foul. Headers may ONLY be done in U12 and U15 and must be done correctly, or a foul is called for safety reasons. There is NO swearing allowed from ANY player. This will result in a yellow card and removal from play. Parents and coaches swearing will land you an ejection. Scoring celebrations may be done by players on your way back to your side of the field. Excessive celebration will result in a PK. I understand that kids get excited, so refs use your best judgement. Yellow cards and red cards are warnings and penalties. A Yellow card can be given to a player who has multiple fowls, one dangerous fowl, or a player who disrespects/ argues with a referee. The result of a yellow card means that the player will be subbed out for a 5min period. A sub may come in, in place of the carded player. Yellow cards given to coaches serve as a warning, if a coach receives a yellow card, they must sit on the bench for five minutes. Red cards are given for fowl language, dangerous play, and misconduct. A player that receives a red card leaves the game for a total of 2 halves. A sub may come in, in place of the carded player. Red cards given to coaches are an automatic ejection. 2 Yellow cards equal a red card.

**Law 13 Free Kicks**. These kicks are the result of a foul. All free kicks are done by a single player. A wall can be built 10 feet away from the kicker. U12 can use and second player for indirect kicks rules are the same as kickoff. Indirect kicks- unintentional fouls result in a free kick that must touch another player before the kicker can touch it or it can be scored. Direct kick- intentional handball or foul results in a free kick that does NOT have to touch anyone to score. The Kicker can only touch the ball once in a direct kick. If a player intentionally hurts another player multiple times, a red card can be awarded. Red card players must leave the field for the rest of the game. Yellow cards can be awarded to players with multiple fouls. Yellow card players must leave the field for 5 mins.

**Law 14 The Penalty Kick**. This kick is done when a foul is committed inside the penalty area. Normally this occurs when a player other than the keeper gets a handball call. This foul is for U10 and up. The ball is placed on the PK line. This is a direct kick. Everyone leaves the penalty area except the keeper, and it is 1v1 with the player. If a team ties in regulation time, in ages u10 or higher, a shootout is used to break the tie. Each team selects 5 players, yes, a keeper can be 1 of the 5. Each team takes turns in a 1v1 PK kick. A coin flip is used to figure out who shoots first. The rest of the shooters stand outside the penalty area. Everyone who is not shooting can stand at half. Announce who is shooting to the keeper. Then ask if the keeper is “ready” and then address the shooter “Ready? On my whistle then.” Blow the whistle and mark on the score sheet M for miss, G for goal. Then rinse and repeat until all shooters have shot or until there is a clear winner. Example of clear winner, 4 players have shot for the teams, team A 1M, 3G with 1 shooter left, team B has 3M, 1G, with 1 shooter left. The winner would be team A. If it is a tie at the end of the shoot-out. Five new players get selected from each team, (the keeper does NOT have to be swapped out) and you begin the shoot out again. The team who started the shoot-out will go second this time around. Excessive celebration can also result in a PK.

**Law 15 The Throw-In.** Throw-in are how play continues after a player kicks the ball out of bounds along the sidelines. Reminder there is no offsides in a throw in.

* U6 ball must come all the way from behind the head. Try to encourage keeping the feet down and throwing to a teammate on the ground.
* U8 two attempts will be given to each player. Ball must go over the head and heels must be on the ground. Crossing the legs or keeping the heels together helps. Dragging the back foot is allow but the toe must not leave the ground.
* U10 has 1 extra attempt. Rules are the same as U8, the sideline ref makes the call for a rethrow or a possession switch.
* U12 will be given 1 attempt per team, rules are the same as U10.
* U15 for an incorrect throw in the ball will be given to the opponent and they will have the throw in. Subs can only be sent in on your teams possession. This rule applies only for U15.

Please practice throw-ins coaches.

**Law 16 The Goal Kick.** Goal kicks are when the ball exits the goal line by an offensive player. The ball can be placed anywhere on the top of the goal area line. (the smaller one) Everyone must leave the penalty area (the bigger one) except the keeper and the kicker. The defensive player must only **one** **touch** the ball, as soon as the ball is touched it becomes a live ball. This is done U8 and up, U6 can kick or do a throw-in from the goal line.

**Law 17 The Corner Kick.** Corner kicks are when the ball exits the goal line by a defensive player. Corner kicks are done from the corner of the field and are a one touch **direct** kick. U6 players can do a throw-in instead. U8 and up will do corner kicks.

Remember to keep things positive, use your best judgement, and most importantly to have fun.

Chelsey Buman SWISL Head Referee

A diagram of a circle with a circle in the center

Description automatically generated

A diagram of a circle with a line and a circle

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

A screen shot of a computer

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