



## AYSO Region 13's Guidance, Interpretations & Modifications for 12U Referees on the Laws of the Game

AYSO Region 13 strives to make soccer safe, fair, and fun for players of all ages. The 12U modifications and guidance are designed to provide an age-appropriate soccer experience for players as they move from the non-competitive younger divisions toward full-size soccer. At 12U, play is governed by FIFA's Laws of the Game ("LOTG"), subject to modifications below.

### **Law 1 — The Field of Play [reduced in size]**

The goals and fields provided for 12U are larger than used in 10U, but usually smaller than regulation. Fields should be played as marked. Goals are usually about 7 feet high and 7 yards wide. (On some fields full size goals may be used.)

### **Law 2 — The Ball [size 4]**

12U plays with a size 4 soccer ball. The ball should be pumped firm to the touch. (Thumbs pressed into a panel should depress that panel, but not cause adjacent panels to depress.)

### **Law 3 — The Players [9 v. 9]**

Nine players are on the field at a time (including one goalkeeper). A team must have six eligible players (including the goalkeeper) on the field to start or continue a game.

### **Law 4 — The Players' Equipment [safety first]**

The no-jewelry mandate is to be strictly enforced for safety — no earrings, no bracelets (includes friendship bracelets, rubber bands, silly bands, etc.), no necklaces, nothing metal (includes bobby-pins) or hard (includes beads) in the hair, etc. (Med-alert bracelets or necklaces are an exception, but should be taped down or otherwise secured for safety.) Casts and splints may never be worn (nor may a player remove a cast or splint to be eligible to play — safety first). Prescription eyeglasses may be worn; non-corrective sunglasses may not.

While cleats are recommended, they are not required. Tennis shoes or other closed-toe shoes the referee considers safe are permitted.

Shin guards are mandatory and must be worn under the socks. (It is not permissible to put the shin guards over the sock and roll the sock down over the shin guards.)

Referees should permit reasonable clothing for warmth — with the uniform shirt on top (any hood must be tucked into the shirt).

### **Law 5 — The Referee**

For Region 13 12U regular season games the home team supplies two officials and the visiting team supplies one official to the game before their own team's game. If the team plays the first game of the day, the officials will referee the last game of the day on that field. (All three officials must have a Regional or higher AYSO referee certification level.) The three referees are a team and should meet for a pre-game discussion that includes deciding who will be the referee and who will be assistant referees. Referees for 12U are strongly encouraged to take the Intermediate Referee course.

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<sup>1</sup> If three properly certified referees are not available, a non-certified person may be a club assistant referee. The club assistant referee only assists the referee with ball out of play (not fouls or offside). If no Regional (or higher) referee is available no game may be played. (Teams may use the field to practice or scrimmage if they wish.)



Parents and other spectators are not allowed behind the goal line and should be at least two yards behind the touch line (the side line) to avoid interfering with play (and, if possible, located between the tops of the two penalty areas). Coaches are responsible for assisting the referee in making sure this takes place. (In Region 13, the home team and parents should be on the north or west side of the field; the visiting team on the other side of the field.) Coaches should remain at least one yard behind the touch line and should remain within the technical area (i.e. within ten yards of the halfway line — the center circle is a good guide for this measurement).

Beginning in the Fall 2019, all dropped balls are to a single player with all other players (from both teams) 4 meters (4 ½ yards) away. If the ball was in the penalty area or was last touched in the penalty area, the ball is dropped to the goalkeeper. Otherwise the ball is dropped to a player of the team that last touched the ball before play was stopped.

### **Law 6 – The Other Match Officials [Assistant Referees]**

Reminders and hints for assistant referees:

- Stay with the second to last defender, the halfway line, or the ball, whichever is closest to the goal line in order to be in position to flag for offside.
- Mirror the referee's throw-in signals for your touch line and for goal kick/corner kick signals at your goal line.
- Each assistant referee keeps a game card and tracks substitutions for their side of the field. The assistant referee should inform the coach if a player has been out for more than one quarter to aid the coach in ensuring each player plays three quarters. (The referee team does not enforce Region 13's three-quarters requirement; the referee should report violations on the back of the game card so that the Region can address the issue.)

### **Law 7 – The Duration of the Match [30 minute halves]**

- 12U plays 30 minute halves — running time (the clock does not stop).
- The LOTG gives the referee discretion to add time if time is lost due to an injury or a team wasting time; Region 13 asks that referees use this discretion only if the game will still end on time. (Ending on time means ending so that the next game can start on time.)
- Approximately halfway through the half (ideally after about 14:00 to 14:30 so that the “quarters” are roughly equal), when the ball is out of play, the referee will allow for substitutions. The clock runs during the substitutions. The substitution is not a “time out” or coaching opportunity, but a break for substitutions — it should be very brief.<sup>2</sup> (On very hot days, referees must make sure the players have enough time to get water, but still avoid excessive delays.)
- Games must end on time.

### **Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play**

The kick off may be kicked in any direction. Only the player taking the kick may be on the opposing side of the field for the kick off.

### **Law 9 — The Ball in and out of Play**

The whole ball must cross the whole line (in the air or on the ground) for the ball to be out of play at goal line or touch line.

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<sup>2</sup> Players may get water during the substitution break — but they may also come to the sideline and be handed water (bottles should never be thrown on the field) at any time during the game as long as they stay on the field (the referee, however, will not delay the restart of the game while they do so). On particularly hot days, the referee should be more patient at the substitution break to ensure players have time to get water.



## **Law 10 — Determining the Outcome of a Match [Scoring]**

The whole ball must cross the whole line (in the air or on the ground) for a goal to be scored. (Tip: A team may score a goal against the other team directly from a direct free kick, kick off, goal kick, or corner kick, but not directly from a throw-in or indirect free kick. A team may not score against itself on any restart unless the ball is played by or touches a player from either team entering the goal.)

## **Law 11 — Offside**

Offside is fully enforced according to the Laws of the Game and is the primary responsibility of the Assistant Referee. As FIFA instructs, offside is judged by a player's position at the time the ball is played by or touches a teammate. An offside infraction only occurs upon a player's active involvement, which generally means either contact with the ball or interfering with an opponent. (The free kick for offside is taken from where the active involvement occurs.)

## **Law 12 — Fouls and Misconduct**

The fouls listed in Law 12 apply. A few tips for referees on common issues:

- Deliberate handling of the ball with the hands or arms — unintended touches of the ball or moving the hands to instinctively protect the player are not deliberate and therefore are not infractions of Law 12 unless the inadvertent handling results in a goal or scoring opportunity. (It can be helpful for the referee to call out “no foul; continue play” or “not deliberate, keep playing” if the ball touches a player's hands or arms but is not an offense.) A useful consideration for referees is: did the player play the ball or did the ball play the player?
- Kicking (or attempting to kick) an opponent — a careless kick of an opponent is an offense and should be called.
- Tripping (or attempting to trip) an opponent — often occurs when a player misses the ball and instead trips an opponent.
- Pushing — often occurs when a player reaches out with an arm and pushes an opponent away.
- Holding — may take place when a player grabs an opponent's shirt in trying to get the ball; also may occur when a player shielding the body unfairly uses his or her arms to keep an opponent away.
- Goalkeeper handling limitations — a goalkeeper may not use his or her hands if a teammate has (1) deliberately kicked (with the foot; this does not include the shin, ankle, knee, etc.) the ball to the goalkeeper or (2) thrown the ball to the goalkeeper on a throw-in. It is not an offense if the ball was miskicked or deflected by the defender, or is cleared in such a manner that the goalkeeper happens to become able to play the ball. It is also not an offense if the Goalkeeper attempts to kick the ball away, miskicks the ball, and then picks up the ball. At this level, only obvious breaches should be whistled.

Heading Ban: As a safety precaution, AYSO prohibits intentionally heading the ball at this level. If a player intentionally hits the ball with his head, an Indirect Free Kick is given to the opposing team.

Cautions and send offs: Misconduct in Region 13 12U games is uncommon. When it occurs, referees should be ready to address and caution or send off players if needed, but are encouraged to address misconduct without showing cards. As the coach is ultimately responsible for the conduct of the players, strive to work with the coach to address conduct issues.

## **Law 13 — The Free Kicks [how play is restarted after fouls or offside]**

The player who takes the free kick may not kick it a second time until another player from either team touches or is touched by the ball. The ball is in play once it is kicked and moves.



All opponents must be 8 yards (for 12U) from the spot of the kick and if the free kick is from the defensive penalty area, all opponents must be outside the penalty area. (A teammate may be closer, and the ball may be passed to that teammate.) If the referee needs to move defenders to 8 yards, the referee must blow the whistles to tell everyone the kick may be taken.

**Law 14 – The Penalty Kick [when a direct free kick foul occurs in the penalty area]**

If a direct free kick offense occurs in the penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded. For 12U, the distance from the goal line to the penalty spot is 10-yards. Effective fall 2019, goalkeepers must have one foot on or above the goal line until the ball is kicked. Referees are encouraged to review the language in Law 14 to be familiar with all elements of the penalty kick.

**Law 15 – The Throw-in [how play is restarted when it crosses the touch line]**

**Law 16 — The Goal Kick [awarded when an attacker last touches a ball over goal line]**

Goal kicks are taken from anywhere within the goal area. The build out line restrictions applied in 10U do not apply in 12U. The ball is in play on a goal kick when it is kicked and clearly moved. (A law change in Fall 2019 means the ball no longer must leave the penalty area to be in play.)

**Law 17 — The Corner Kick [awarded when a defender last touches a ball over goal line]**

Corner kicks are taken from anywhere within the arc marked at the corner of the field. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.

The Laws of the Game only have 17 Laws. But referees sometimes refer to “Law 18” which they talk about as the Law of common sense. Always use common sense and keep in mind the AYSO credo of safe, fair, and fun in making decisions.

You can ask questions about the Laws of the Game or other referee issues on the “Ask the Ref” page of the Region 13 website. <http://ayso13.org/referee/ask-the-ref/>



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