

2025/26 Laws of the Game Updates
Took Effect July 1, 2025
These rules apply to all age groups

Law 3- The Players

- Competitions may choose to implement the “Only the Captain” guidelines

Law 5- The Referee

- Provides the approved signal for referees to countdown the last 5-seconds of the 8-second restriction on goalkeeper controlling the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s)

Law 8- The Start and Restart of Play- Dropped Ball

- Provides guidance on dropping the ball when the ball is inside or outside of the penalty area

Law 9- The Ball In and Out of Play

- Indirect free kick and no disciplinary sanction when a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or player who is temporarily off the field of play touches the ball as it is leaving the field of play and there is no intention to interfere unfairly

Law 11- Offside

- When the goalkeeper throws the ball, the last point of contact should be used for the purpose of determining an offside position.

Law 12- Fouls and Misconduct

- A goalkeeper who controls the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than eight seconds, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

Law 16/17- The Goal Kick and The Corner Kick

- Reference to other Laws detailing situations which result in a goal kick or corner kick

4 Key IFAB Laws of the Game Changes for 2025/2026

Only the Captain Guidelines

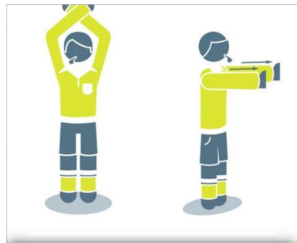
Law 3- The Players (Not a revision, rather additional text)

Competitions may choose to implement the 'only the captain' guidelines

- Designed to improve on field behavior
- Believed that stronger collaboration between the referee and team captains can help to instill fairness and mutual respect
- Each team must have a captain on the field of play who wears an identifying armband

Key New Concepts:

- Referee can implement 'only the captain' to prevent mobbing or being surrounded by players
- Normal interactions between players and referee are allowed and remain important
- Any player (including captain) who shows dissent by words or action will still be cautioned (yellow card)



Additional Info:

- Captain has the responsibility to encourage teammates to respect 'captain only' sign
 - If a captain enters 'captain only' zone, they will be issued a yellow card for dissent
 - More than one player can be cautioned if needed
 - Refs should also include this in the game reports
- When a goalkeeper is a captain, the ref must be informed before kick-off (no later than at coin toss)
- Only goalkeeper or nominated player may approach ref- NOT both
- If nominated player is subbed or sent-off, another player must be nominated

Dropped Ball

Law 9- The Ball In and Out of Play

If, when play was stopped:

The ball was inside the penalty area, the referee drops it for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area.

The ball was outside the penalty area, the referee drops it for one player of the team that has or would have gained possession if this can be determined by the referee; otherwise, it is dropped for one player of the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped.

Key New Concepts:

- Which team has possession or clearly would have gained possession is a criteria to determine who receives a dropped ball
- Outside the penalty area, the restart occurs where the ball was when it was stopped versus when it was last touched



8-Second Goalkeeper Control

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

A corner kick is awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their penalty area, controls the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than eight seconds before releasing it. If a goalkeeper has control of the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than eight seconds, the referee will now award a corner kick (rather than an indirect free kick) on the side of the field closest to the goalkeeper's position when penalized. There is no disciplinary action unless the goalkeeper repeatedly commits the offense.

To assist the goalkeeper, the referee will signal the final five seconds using a raised hand.

Key New Concepts:

- Goalkeepers have 8-seconds to release the ball once they have clear control
- Referees will signal the final 5-seconds as a public countdown, serving as a warning to prevent time-wasting
- If the goalkeeper exceeds the time limit, the restart is a corner kick for the opposing team



Impeding/Preventing Goalkeeper Release

- An indirect free kick will be awarded if a player prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from their hands or kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing it.
 - In this situation, the attacker is responsible for any delay and not the goalkeeper

The Corner Kick

- As with all restarts, the attacking team will have the ability to take the corner kick quickly as long as all requirements for the restart have been satisfied (e.g., ball is stationary and placed properly, only one ball on the field, etc.).
- Delaying the corner kick deliberately will result in a yellow card for delaying the restart.

Ball In Play

Law 9- The Ball In and Out of Play (Not a revision, rather additional text)

The ball is in play at all other times (...) and remains on the field of play.

If, without intending to interfere with play unfairly, a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or player who is temporarily off the field of play (injury, adjusting equipment, etc.) touches the ball while it is still in play but when clearly leaving the field of play, this is penalized with an indirect free kick; there is no sanction.

Key New Concept:

An indirect free kick and no disciplinary sanction is the correct punishment for players/subs off the field & coaches/staff in the technical area who touch the ball before going out, in an honest attempt to restart the game quickly.