



FIFA Rules

Philosophy and Spirit

Football is the greatest sport on earth. It is played on every continent, in every country and at many different levels. The fact that the Laws of the Game are the same for all football throughout the world, from the FIFA World Cup™ through to a game between young children in a remote village, is a considerable strength which must continue to be harnessed for the good of football everywhere.

Football must have Laws which keep the game fair – this is a crucial foundation of the 'beautiful game' and a vital feature of the 'spirit' of the game. The best matches are those where the referee is rarely needed because the players play with respect for each other, the match officials and the Laws.

Football's Laws are relatively simple compared to most other team sports, but as many situations are subjective and match officials are human, some decisions will inevitably be wrong or cause debate and discussion. For some people, this discussion is part of the game's enjoyment and attraction but, whether decisions are right or wrong, the 'spirit' of the game requires that referees' decisions must always be respected. All those in authority, especially coaches and team captains, have a clear responsibility to the game to respect the match officials and their decisions.

The Laws cannot deal with every possible situation, so where there is no direct provision in the Laws, The IFAB expects the referee to make a decision within the 'spirit' of the game and the Laws – this often involves asking the question, "what would football want/expect?"

WHAT WOULD FOOTBALL WANT?

The Laws must also contribute to the safety and welfare of players and it is The IFAB's responsibility to react quickly and appropriately to support the game's participants, through the Laws themselves, when the need arises. For example, a temporary amendment to Law 3 was introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to give top competitions the option of increasing the maximum number of substitutions for each team from three to five. That amendment became part of the Laws of the Game in 2022. Trials are also continuing with additional 'concussion substitutes' so that teams can prioritise the welfare of a player who has an actual or suspected concussion without suffering a numerical disadvantage.

Accidents inevitably occur, but the Laws aim to help make the game as safe as possible, balancing player welfare and sporting fairness. This requires referees to use the Laws to deal strongly with those players whose actions are too aggressive or dangerous. The Laws embody the unacceptability of unsafe play in their disciplinary phrases, such as 'reckless challenge' and 'endangering the safety of an opponent' or 'using excessive force'.

To promote a greater understanding of the Laws, The IFAB has published 'Football Rules – simplified Laws of the Game', which have been written to make the Laws easier to understand, especially for young people, potential or newly qualified referees, adults who referee occasionally, players, coaches(including those working towards a coaching qualification), spectators and the media.

Visit www.footballrules.com to access or download Football Rules, which can be sorted alphabetically or by category.