



WideWorld Sports Center

Soccer Referee Guidelines/Tips

Here are some guidelines for refereeing your matches at WideWorld Sports Center. Some are requirements that you must follow. Others are helpful hints. Many are intended to prevent common mistakes being made by WWSC referees.

Please keep in mind that it is our goal to help you develop as a referee at the same time that you are serving our customers. Therefore, our rules have been kept as close as possible to the FIFA Laws for outdoor soccer used throughout the world, **(there is NO slide tackling at WideWorld)** so you can referee in a similar manner throughout the year and develop your skills without unnecessary confusion and interpretations. Also, we encourage the use of refereeing mechanics that correspond as closely as possible to the USSF standards you follow in outdoor games and are taught in USSF classes, and which you see used by refs in FIFA games on TV.

• THE VISITING TEAM KICKS OFF FIRST.

• **THE HOME TEAM PROVIDES THE GAME BALL**, although you may solicit a ball from the visiting team if the home team's ball is unsatisfactory. You may also use a ball volunteered by the visiting team if it is really nice! You are not responsible for pumping up a flat ball, or for lowering the pressure on a ball that is too hard, but it is a nice touch to bring a pump when you ref because otherwise you will either have to send the team to the office, wasting time, or watch 50 minutes of lousy soccer because the ball is too soft/hard! (Plus, it can't hurt to help out the teams if you want them to be nice to you during the game!)

• **DON'T WAIT UNTIL 10 SECONDS BEFORE THE KICKOFF TO GET A GAME BALL.** You should do this a couple of minutes before that, in case the ball needs air or needs to be set aside in favor of finding a better ball. **THE WIDEWORLD SOCCER BALLS ARE NOT THE ONLY BALL THAT CAN BE USED.**

• BOOK THE PLAYER WHEN YOU "CARD."

You MUST record the number of the player and the nature of the infraction BEFORE RESTARTING PLAY WHEN A CARD IS SHOWN FOR MISCONDUCT. DO NOT simply rush to show the card and restart play and then expect to remember this information later. This information MUST be written down immediately to guarantee the accuracy of the game report, and to ensure that you will not later make the embarrassing mistake of failing to send off a player who has received a 2nd caution. The player numbers and information is also necessary to WWSC management in order to track misconduct and issue suspensions as necessary, to keep play "clean" in leagues throughout the season.

The usual procedure for showing a card — with certain exceptions* — is:

1. Whistle as necessary to stop play.
2. Move calmly (unless more prompt action is needed to prevent retaliation) toward the guilty player(s) while taking out your card wallet or notepad. Beckon the player toward you in a non-aggressive manner if he is moving away. Ask him politely to turn around if you cannot see his number when facing him directly.
3. Record the player's number and the description of the infraction. The infraction should be phrased as it appears in the WWSC Rules. For example, "pushing" is not a cautionable offense. This would be have to be classified as either "unsporting behavior" or "repeated infringement" as appropriate, followed by a description of the offense if so desired by the referee (this will help management in disciplinary matters). DO NOT go to the bench to record this information directly on the scoresheet. The scoresheet can be filled in later — at halftime or after the match — when you have more time. Turning your back to the field of play to record information directly on the scoresheet could allow retaliation to occur unnoticed behind you.
4. Show the card to the player by calmly holding it straight up above your head while facing toward the guilty player. There is no need to get "in his face" or thrust the card aggressively at the player, as this may only inflame the situation. **HOLD THE CARD ABOVE YOUR HEAD LONG ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE TO SEE IT AND EASILY RECOGNIZE WHICH PLAYER IS BEING SANCTIONED.**
5. Send the player to the bench to serve his time-penalty (unless you wish to keep penalty time yourself) that the penalty **DOES NOT BEGIN UNTIL PLAY IS RESTARTED.**
6. Transfer all the relevant information onto the scoresheet either at halftime or after the match.

*There are situations when the immediate production of a card may be needed to prevent retaliation, for example, and referees are trusted to use their discretion in applying the proper method for the circumstance. It still is necessary, though, to always record the relevant information **before play restarts**, even if the card is shown first.

• **DON'T USE BOTH ARMS AT THE SAME TIME WHEN SIGNALLING THE DIRECTION OF A RESTART***.

Some referees habitually point with both hands after a foul: one in the direction of the restart, the other to where the ball should be placed. But almost always, this 2nd arm is superfluous because the spot is obvious, and this 2nd arm only makes it more difficult for players (and the other referee) to discern the what direction the ref is signalling for the restart. The direction (in other words, who is taking the free kick or restart) is what the players and other ref need to know right away, so they can get into position for the restart. If the ball is improperly placed, you can deal with that afterward.

Simply use one arm to clearly and assertively indicate the direction of the restart by pointing at 45 degrees above the horizontal (if you point straight forward instead of at 45 degrees above that, your signal may be confused with that for a goal kick). Hold this signal for 3-4 seconds as necessary to give the players and other referee ample opportunity to see it, just in case they were looking at something else when you blew the whistle. This requires little extra effort and is a courtesy appreciated by the players.

In the rare instance that, after this, you find the ball is being incorrectly placed, you may *then* gesture to indicate the proper spot.

• **BE ASSERTIVE WHEN YOU SIGNAL.** Point your arm straight out, quickly and firmly, with all fingers fully extended. This indicates confidence in your call. Wimpy signals make you look like a wimpy referee — when you meekly poke a hand out, with a bent elbow, this does not suggest you are confident enough in your decision to stand behind it. This erodes the players' confidence in your calls.

Also, wimpy signals make it harder for the players and the other referee to tell what the call is.

*The only exception would be to hold one arm straight up in the air to indicate an indirect free kick, while using the other arm to point in the direction of the IFK if you believe there might be confusion as to which team is entitled to the kick.

• **IF AN INDIRECT FREE KICK HAS BEEN AWARDED** (such as for dangerous play or striking the ceiling with the ball), you **MUST HOLD ONE ARM FULLY EXTENDED, STRAIGHT UP, TO INDICATE THIS** and hold it until the ball has touched by another player of either team. Verbally indicating that the kick is indirect, too, may be a good idea to prevent confusion in you feel you are not dealing with experienced players.

• **AVOID SUPERFLUOUS WHISTLES***. There is NO requirement for you to blow the whistle every time the ball goes out of bounds or in the goal. Basically, you should only use it when you need to capture the players' attention at important times. If the players already know the ball is dead, just signal the restart. Use your common sense. In general, the older and more experienced the players are, the less often you will need to blow the whistle. You can also use your voice in place of the whistle when the whistle is not really needed. If the ball goes straight into the side netting, for example, I'll just give an arm signal for the direction of the kick-in and say, "blue kick," etc.

Here are some other situations when whistles might be unnecessary:

• **The ball is shot directly into the back of the goal, hits the padding with a loud "thud," and falls to the ground behind the goal line.** *Everyone stops playing, because it is obvious that a goal has been scored.* Why blow the whistle? Unless there was a foul beforehand, everyone knows this is a goal and what to do next, so just point to the center mark. Indeed, you need to save the power of the whistle for those situations when there was foul that negates the goal — then, there will be lots of noise and cheering, and you will need the whistle to get the players' attention (you may want to use a rat-a-tat whistling action). Only in situations when the goal is not clear — such as when it crosses the goal line briefly, and then is pulled back into play — do you need to blow the whistle after a goal.

• **The ball is shot way over the top of the goal and straight into the perimeter netting.** Simply say "goal kick," and make the proper signal.

• **A free kick is awarded. DON'T MAKE THE PLAYERS "WAIT FOR YOUR WHISTLE" unless a "wall" needs to be set, etc., or you are not ready for the restart (i.e., you are writing a player's number in your notebook).** Instead, simply gesture or use your voice ("o.k., go ahead"). In fact, insisting on blowing the whistle before every restart is now an outdated habit and is openly discouraged by FIFA, because this prevents the kicking team from taking the quick restart they usually are entitled to. They should be able to restart immediately after you make the call, unless special circumstances exist.

Also, superfluous whistles create are going to irritate or confuse players and referees on the field next door. Excessive whistling can spoil the enjoyment of players and spectators and make you look like a robotic "book" referee, rather than one who uses his or her common sense.

Think before you use the whistle. You are not a robot, and neither are the players. Use your common sense. Spare everyone the annoyance of superfluous whistles, and conserve your whistle power!

*Of course, the whistle will need to be used more often with very young players (especially players under age 10, or with novice players, who do not yet have a common understanding of the rules. With older kids and adults, you can still always blow the whistle if players surprise you by continuing to play after a seemingly obvious stoppage.

• **Don't use the phrase "PLAY ON!" UNLESS YOU ARE APPLYING THE ADVANTAGE CLAUSE.** This should be accompanied by an upswing of both arms. Combined, these two gestures inform the players that there was an offense, and why play is not being stopped.

DO NOT use "Play on!" as a generic phrase that you shout every time you want the players to continue playing for whatever reason. If an incidental collision occurs, for example, and you wish to clarify that no foul has occurred and that play should continue, say something totally different such as "no foul," or "keep going!", so people will not think that you in fact saw a foul and are applying the advantage clause. Some referees choose to shout "play!" when players stop prematurely or complain for a foul call, but this may still sound too close to "Play on" to make your intentions clear.

• **WHEN THE BALL GOES OUT IN THE CORNER, AND YOU ARE IN DOUBT AS TO WHETHER TO AWARD A GOAL-KICK OR A KICK-IN TO DEFENSE,** AWARD A GOAL KICK. A goal-kick is much easier for the defense to take (since they have a choice of where to spot the ball within the goal area, and the goalkeeper is more comfortable here than in taking an awkward kick-in from the corner), and it saves you from having to direct the players on where to spot the ball for a kick-in. Therefore, the game is restarted more fairly, quickly, and efficiently when a goal-kick is awarded.

• **IF A GOAL IS SCORED DIRECTLY FROM AN INDIRECT FREE KICK,** the correct restart is a goal kick for the defending team.

• **IF A TEAM SCORES AN OWN GOAL ON ITSELF DIRECTLY FROM IT'S OWN FREE KICK OR KICK-IN** (yeah, I've actually seen this happen!), the correct restart is a corner-kick for the opposing team.