

SECTION TWO

Small Sided Football Laws of the Game Abridged Version (Player's Guide)

Revised April 2007

These laws provide a summary of the key Laws of the game for Small Sided Football that will be of concern to participants. A full version of the Laws of the game can be found in section one of this publication.

Small-Sided Football Laws of the Game Players' Guide

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The Normal Laws of Association Football apply with exceptions:

1. The Players' Equipment – A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player. Jewellery, which is potentially dangerous and cannot be easily removed, should be taped. Shinguards, must be covered entirely by the socks, made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic or similar substances) and provide a reasonable degree of protection.

Goalkeepers are permitted to wear long trousers and must wear colours, which easily distinguish him from the other players and the referees.

2. The Authority of the Referee – Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed, from the moment he enters the locality where the pitch is situated until he leaves.

3. The Duration of the Match – the game shall be divided into two equal periods of over five and up to 25 minutes each period subject to the following:

- (d) Allowance shall be made in either period for time lost through stoppages as decided by the referee.
- (e) The duration of either half shall be extended to enable a penalty kick to be taken. The Half Time interval shall not exceed five minutes except by consent of the Referee.
- (f) Competition rules may allow for a game to be played in its entirety without a half time interval or requirement to change ends.

4. Kick-off is a way of starting or restarting play: at the start of the match, after a goal has been scored, at the start of the second half of the match, and at the start of each period of extra time, where applicable. A goal may be scored directly from the kick-off. All players must be in their own half of the field; the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least 2m from the ball until it is in play. The ball must be stationary on the centre mark until the referee gives a signal. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward. The kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has touched another player.

Dropped Ball is a way of restarting the match after a temporary stoppage. Play restarts when the ball touches the ground.

Ball Out of Play – The ball is out of play when: it has wholly crossed the goal line or touchline, whether on the ground or in the air, when the referee has stopped play, or when playing indoor's, the ball hits the ceiling.

Ball In Play – The ball is in play at all other times including when: it rebounds from a goal post, the crossbar, or the barricades onto the pitch, or if it rebounds from the referee when on the pitch. When a match is being played on an indoor pitch and the ball accidentally hits the ceiling, the game is restarted by an indirect free kick awarded to the opposing team to the team, which last touched the ball.

Height of ball restrictions – If a height restriction is to be introduced the competition rules should identify the height above which an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team. If a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team an indirect free kick should be awarded on the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place. The exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should continue in this circumstance. Should another player then play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team.

Offside – There is no offside.

Areas of Play – All players, both attackers and defenders, are permitted to play within the penalty area. Goals can be scored within the penalty area.

5. Substitution Procedure – The maximum number of substitutes permitted is three.

The number of substitutions made during a match is unlimited. A player who has been replaced may return to the pitch as a substitute for another player. Substitutions should take place when there is a break in play, or during play if the second official is involved in refereeing the game.

Changing Places with the Goalkeeper – Any of the other players, or substitutes, may change places with the goalkeeper. The following conditions must be observed: the referee must be informed before the change is made; a change may only be made during a stoppage in play, the replacement goalkeeper must wear a jersey, which distinguishes him from all other players.

Viability of a match – Playing Numbers – For 5, 6 or 7 a side if a team loses at any time more than 2 members of their team the match should be abandoned. However this should only apply when players are permanently excluded or lost through injury rather than within the 'Sin Bin' for a two minute suspension.

6. Fouls and Misconduct – Fouls and misconduct are penalised as follows:

A Direct Free Kick A direct free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred and can be kicked directly into the opponent's goal to score a goal. The referee keeps one arm horizontal pointing in the direction the kick has to be taken A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- Attempts to kick or trip an opponent
- Jumps at, pushes, holds or charges an opponent (even with the shoulder)
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Spits at an opponent,
- Slides in an attempt to play the ball when it is being played or attempted to be played by an opponent (sliding tackle), except when the match is being played on a natural or artificial grass playing surface,
- Handles the ball deliberately

A Penalty Kick is awarded against a team, which commits any of the offences for which a direct free kick is awarded, inside its own penalty area and while the ball is in play. Additional time is allowed for a penalty kick to be taken at the end of each half or at the end of each period of extra time.

Position of the Ball and the Players for a Penalty kick – The ball is placed on the penalty mark; the player taking the penalty kick is properly identified. The defending goalkeeper must remain on his goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, until the ball has been kicked. The players other than the kicker are located: inside the pitch, outside the penalty area, behind or to the side of the penalty mark, at least 5m from the ball. The player taking the penalty must kick the ball forward; they may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward.

Indirect Free Kicks – An indirect free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred, unless this was in the penalty area, in which case the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. An indirect free kick is awarded for the following offences;

- A Goalkeeper touches or controls the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked or thrown to him by a teammate.
- A Goalkeeper Touches or controls the ball with his hands or feet, in the penalty area, for more than four seconds.
- The ball exceeds the height of ball restrictions (optional modification).
- If in the opinion of the referee, a player: plays in a dangerous manner, deliberately impedes the progress of an opponent when the ball is not being played, prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands, commits any other offence, not previously mentioned for which play is stopped to administer a temporary timed suspension or dismiss a player.

From an Indirect Free Kick a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal. For an Indirect Free Kick: the referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising his arm above his head. He maintains his arm in that position until the kick has been taken and the ball has touched another player or goes out of play.

Position of Free Kick – All opponents must be at least 1m from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play after it has been touched or played.

7. Disciplinary Sanctions – The use of temporary time suspensions ('sin bins') and the exclusion of a player arising from the issuing of a red card are the disciplinary sanctions for use in small-sided football. Match officials should employ the use of temporary timed suspensions in all cases traditionally regarded as cautionable offences. Yellow cards are no longer to be used in small-sided football.

The options for a match official imposing disciplinary sanctions are therefore;

- Player shown a blue card is temporarily suspended from play
- Player issued with a discretionary blue card and temporarily suspended from play
- Player issued with a red card is permanently excluded from play

A blue card offence should always be accompanied by a temporary suspension from play of two minutes in duration. The release of players from a temporary suspension should be at the direction of the Referee or a Match Official if one is available.

Temporary Timed Suspensions – A player is shown the blue card and temporarily excluded from play if he commits any of the following offences: is guilty of unsporting behaviour, shows dissent by word or action, persistently infringes the Laws of the Game, delays the restart of play, fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, kick-in, free kick or goal clearance. Enters or re-enters the pitch without the referee's permission or infringes the substitution procedure, deliberately leaves the pitch without the referee's permission.

For any of these offences, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. If the offence was committed within the penalty area the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the place nearest to where the infringement occurred.

Sending-Off Offences – A player is sent off and shown the red card if he commits any of the following offences: is guilty of serious foul play, is guilty of violent conduct, spits at an opponent or any other person, denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area). Denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick. Uses offensive, insulting or abusive language. Or if a player receives a second blue card in the same match.

Decisions – A player who has been sent off may not take any further part in the match nor may he sit on the substitutes' bench, where provided.

8. The Kick-In is a method of restarting play. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-in. A kick-in is awarded if, the whole of the ball passes over a touch line, either on the ground or in the air, or hits the ceiling. A Kick-in is taken from the place where it crossed the touchline or 2m into the playing area adjacent to where the ball left the playing area when barricades are in use. The kick is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball.

The player taking the kick-in may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player. The ball is in play immediately after it is kicked or touched. The players of the defending team must be at least 1m from the place where the kick-in is taken. The feet of the player taking the kick-in must not cross the line.

The Corner Kick – A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

9. Modifications to the Laws – Any or all of the following modifications are permissible:

- Size of the field of play
- Size, weight and material of the ball
- Width between the goalposts and height of the crossbar from the ground
- The duration of the periods of play
- Substitutions
- Height of ball restrictions

Modifications to the Laws should be detailed in the competition regulations.