



USSOC

Law 12 - Fouls & Misconduct



U.S. Soccer Federation Referee Program
Enter Level Referee Course
Competitive Youth Training
Small Sided and Recreational Youth Training



Law 12 Overview

The Law 12 is separated into two parts. The first part is about fouls and the second part deals with misconduct.

❖ Fouls

- Direct free kick fouls (DFK)
- Indirect free kick fouls (IFK)

❖ Misconduct

- Cautionable offenses
- Sending-off offenses





USSOC



Part 1 – Fouls



U.S. SOCCER FEDERATION REFEREE PROGRAM



Offenses

If the ball is in-play and a player commits an offense inside the field-of-play against:

- an opponent – restart is an IFK, DFK or PK,
- a team-mate, a substitute, a substituted player or any team official – restart is a **DFK or PK**,
- a match official (Referee or AR) – restart is a **DFK or PK**,
- any other person – restart is a dropped ball



Fouls

A foul is an unfair or unsafe action that meets the following criteria:

- **Committed by a player**
- **Against an opponent or the opposing team**
- **On the field of play**
- **While the ball is in play**

If these four (4) requirements are not met, the unfair or unsafe action cannot be a foul, but it may still be misconduct.



USSOC



Types of Fouls

In most matches, there are usually two types of fouls.

However, the local rules of competition may specify different types of fouls to be called and their respective restarts.

The referee must know the rules of competition for the match they are officiating.



USSOC



Types of Fouls

In competitive youth matches, there are two types of fouls. Each type reflects the kind of restart used.

- **Direct free kick fouls (DFK)**

- A DFK is awarded if one of the ten (10) direct free kick fouls are committed.
- Any fouls that involve contact are penalized with a DFK or a PK, if the offence occurred within the offending teams own penalty area.
- A goal can be scored directly (one touch) from the taking of the restart.



USSOC



Types of Fouls

In competitive youth matches, there are two types of fouls. Each type reflects the kind of restart used.

- **Indirect free kick fouls (IFK)**

- An IFK is awarded if a player commits one of the eight (8) indirect free kick fouls.
- The ball must be touched by another player (from either team) before a goal can be scored from an IFK.



USSOC



Direct Free Kick

❖ The ten (10) direct free kick (DFK) fouls are separated into a group of seven (7) actions and a group of three (3) actions.



❖ For the first seven (7) of the ten (10) direct free kick (DFK) fouls, the referee must determine if the action has been committed carelessly or **Recklessly** or with **Excessive Force**.



USSOC

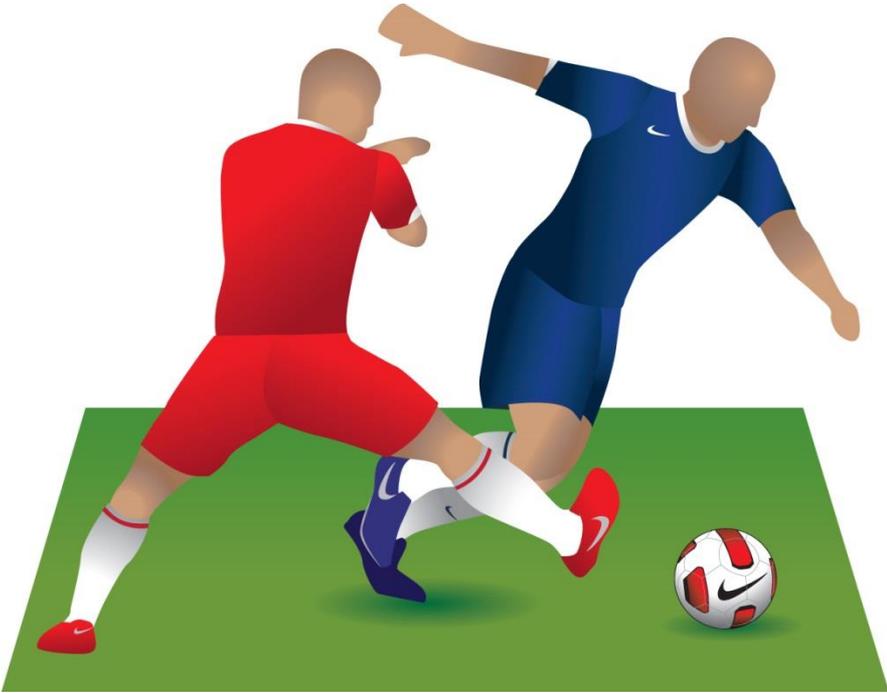


(1) Kicking



Kicking or Attempting to Kick.

(2) Tripping

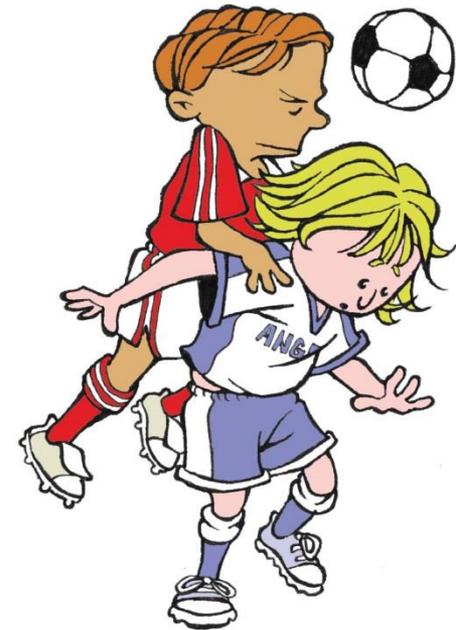


Tripping or Attempting to Trip.



(3) Jumping At

USSOC



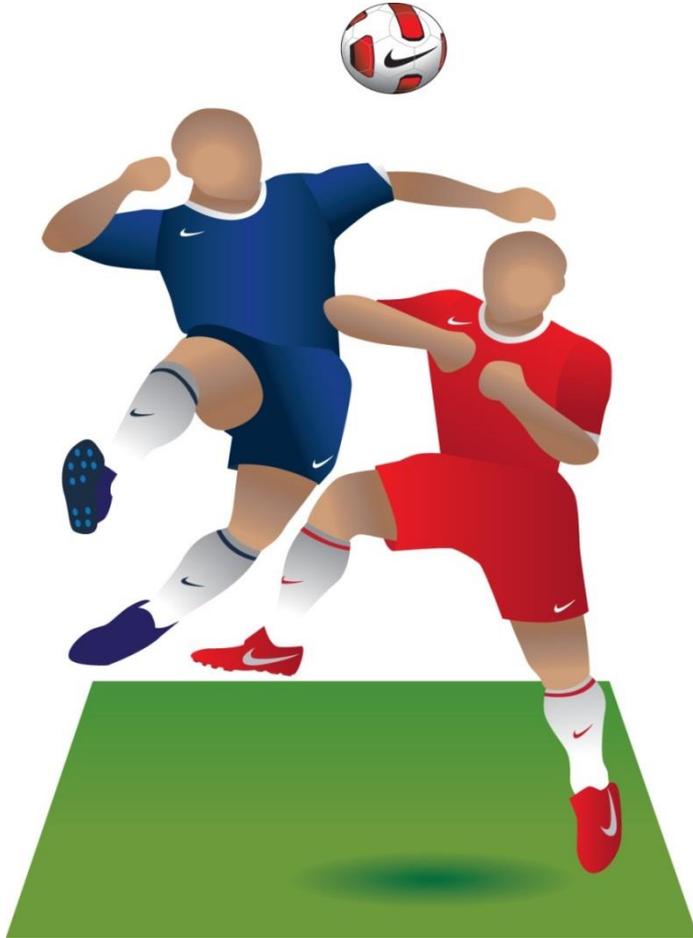
Jumping At an Opponent.

(4) Tackles or Challenges



Tackling or Challenging an opponent ... when contact is made with the player before the ball.

(5) Striking

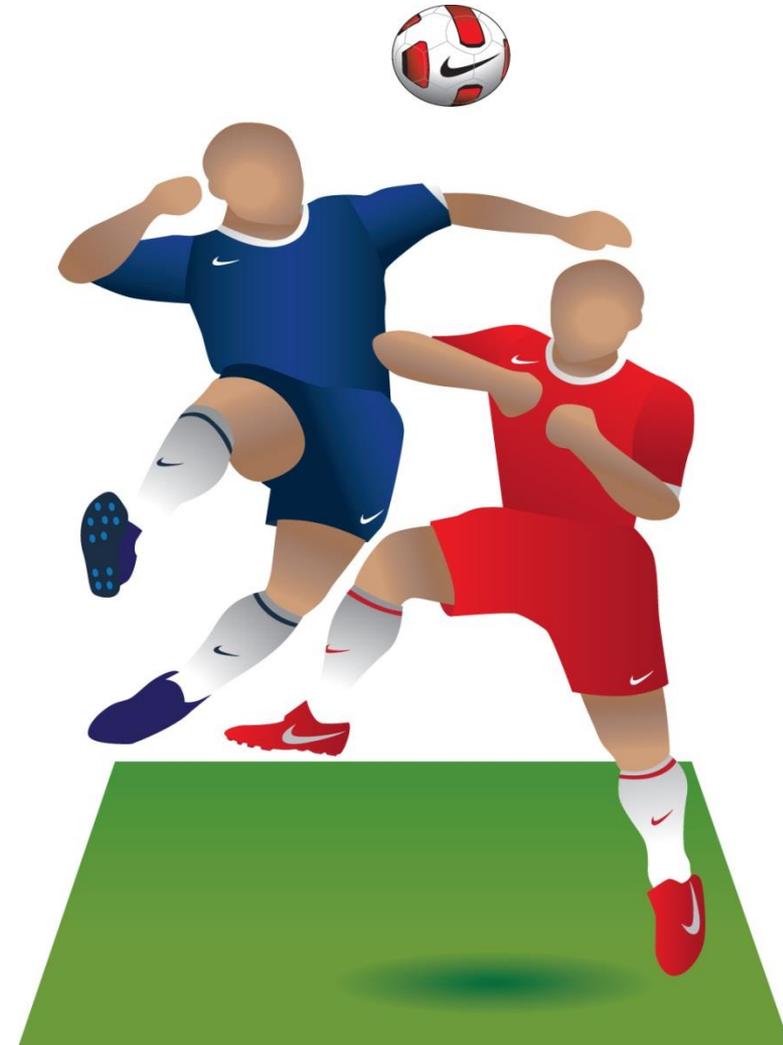


Striking or Attempting to Strike

(5) Striking

Striking or Attempting to Strike.

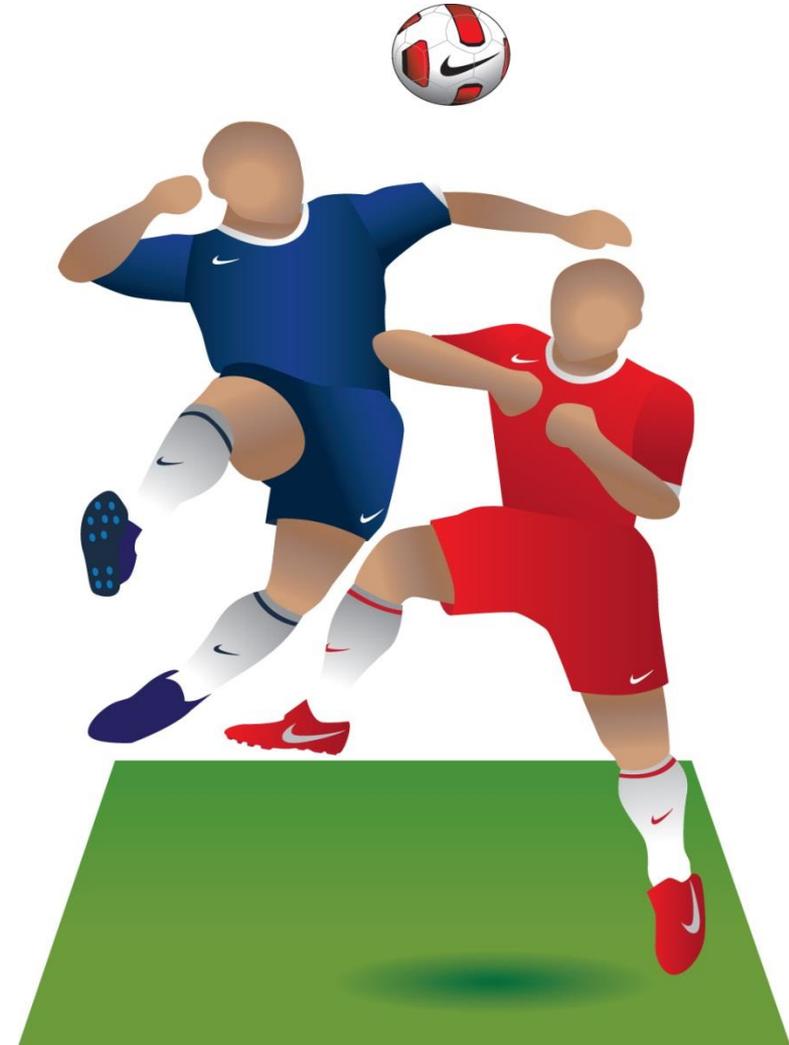
Striking can be performed by direct contact using hands, arms, elbows, head, or knees, or by throwing any object, including the ball.



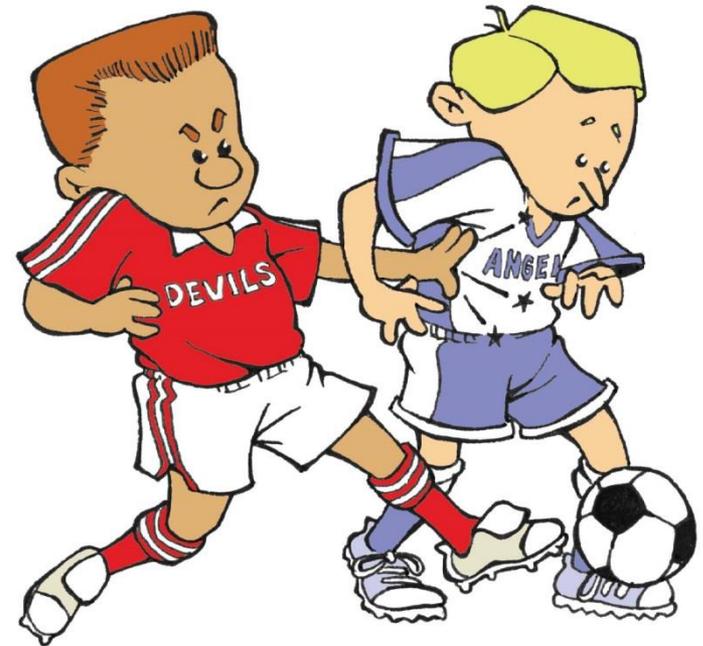
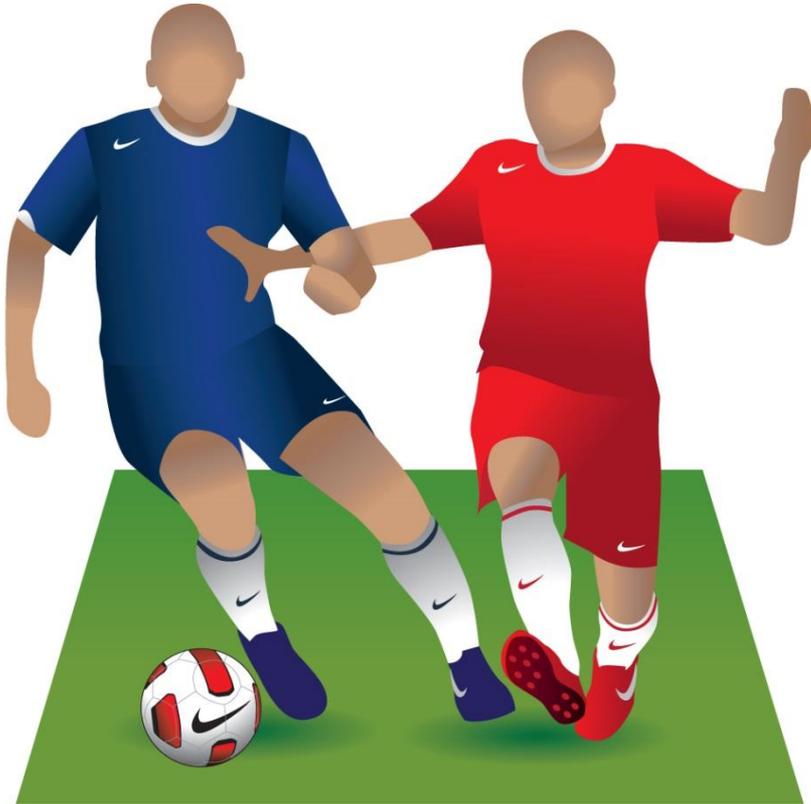
(5) Striking

Striking or Attempting to Strike.

A striking foul occurs where contact is made with the opponent or where contact would have been made if the attempt to strike is unsuccessful.



(6) Pushing



Pushing ... with hands, body or arms

(7) Charging



Charging ... not shoulder to shoulder



USSOC



(7) Charging

Charging is a challenge for space using physical contact within playing distance of the ball without using arms or elbows.



Charging is a foul when it is not shoulder to shoulder.



Careless

It is important to distinguish between the terms careless, reckless, and excessive force when discussing the first seven (7) direct free kick (DFK) fouls.

Careless means that the player has shown a lack of attention or consideration when making a challenge or that they acted without precaution.

No further disciplinary sanction is needed if a foul is judged to be careless.



USSOC



Careless

Note that all instances of kicking, striking or attempting to do either, should be considered as careless at a minimum.

Kicking and striking fouls are more likely to be reckless or using excessive force, than careless, so referees should be mindful of this when dealing with fouls of this nature.



USSOC



Reckless

Reckless means that the player has acted with disregard to the danger to, or consequences for, their opponent when making a challenge for the ball.

A player who plays in a reckless manner must be cautioned and shown a yellow card.



USSOC



Excessive Force

Using excessive force means that the player has far exceeded the necessary use of force, is in danger of injuring their opponent, or has acted without regard for the opponent's safety when challenging for the ball.

A player who uses excessive force must be sent off and shown a red card.



USSOC



Direct Free Kick

Most direct free kick (DFK) fouls committed during small-sided and recreational youth games will qualify as careless. They are typically the byproduct of players who are still developing and learning the game.

When a player commits one of these seven (7) direct free kick (DFK) fouls carelessly, referees should not hesitate to stop play to promote a safe environment for the players.



Direct Free Kick

USSOC



Referees must also be aware that certain actions and behaviors should be punished more severely when appropriate. Typical level of fouls in a small-sided or recreational youth game are:

- **Careless ... Most common**
- **Reckless ... Less common**
- **Excessive force ... Rarely seen**



USSOC



Direct Free Kick

For the final three direct free kick (DFK) fouls, the referee does not have to determine if the actions were committed carelessly, recklessly or with excessive force



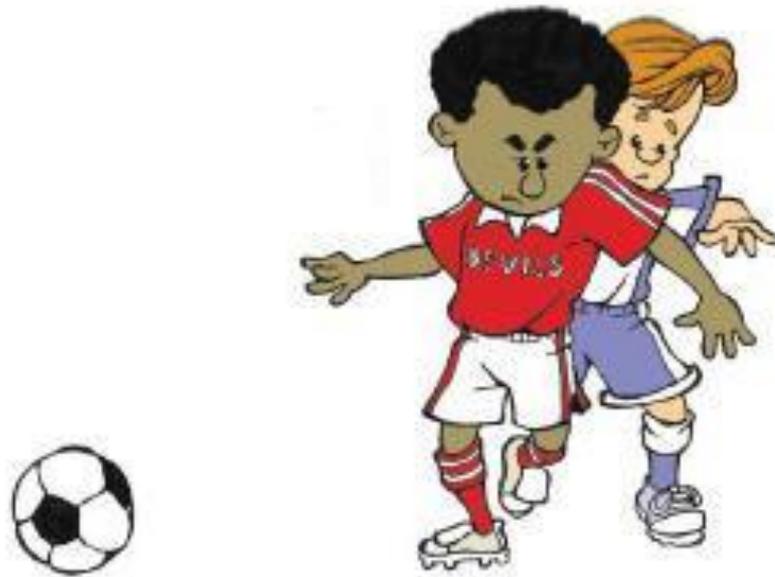
These three (3) fouls need only to happen for the referee to take action.

(8) Holding



Holding ... Includes holding any part of an opponent's body or uniform.

(8) Holding



Holding ... Includes impeding an opponent with contact (sometimes referred to as blocking)

(9) Spitting At



Spitting At an Opponent

(10) Deliberate Handling

Unlike all the other direct free kick (DFK) fouls, note that deliberate handling is committed against the opposing team, not against a specific opposing player.



Deliberate Handling ... with hand or arm



USSOC



(10) Deliberate Handling

Handling the ball is the deliberate act of a player making contact with the ball with their hand or arm.

The referee should look at the following factors to help them decide if the handling offense was deliberate:

- **The movement of the hand towards the ball, not the ball towards the hand.**
- **The distance between the opponent and the ball.**



USSOC

(10) Deliberate Handling



Additional things the referee should look at are:

- **The position of the hand does not necessarily mean that there is an infringement.**
- **Touching the ball with an object held in hand is an infringement**
- **Hitting the ball with a thrown object also counts as an infringement**



DFK Restart Location

USSOC



In most matches, the restart (free kick) is taken where the offense occurred (with the exceptions described later).

However, the local rules of competition may specify different types and locations of the restart.

The referee must know the rules of competition for the match they are officiating.



DFK Restart Location

USSOC



If a DFK is awarded, it is taken from the place where the offense occurred with two exceptions:

- **When a DFK is awarded inside a team's own goal area, the kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area.**
- **When a DFK is awarded for player committing one of the ten (10) DFK fouls within their own penalty area, the kick is taken from the penalty mark (a Penalty Kick – Law 14).**



DFK Restart Location

USSOC



A penalty kick is the result of a DFK offense in a team's own penalty area. It doesn't matter where the ball was when the offense was committed (as long as the ball is in play).

Note, if a player strikes (or attempts to strike) someone by throwing an object, the location of the offense is where the person was struck (or would have been struck), not the location of the person who threw the object.



USSOC



Indirect Free Kick

An IFK is awarded to the opposing team if, in the opinion of the referee, a player does the following:



- **Plays in a dangerous manner**
- **Impedes the progress of an opponent without making contact**
- **Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from their hands**



USSOC



Indirect Free Kick

The indirect free kick (IFK) fouls are also separated into two groups.



There are four (4) fouls committed by field players and four (4) fouls specifically committed by a goalkeeper.



USSOC



Indirect Free Kick



The first group of four (4) indirect free kick (IFK) fouls can be committed by any field player including the goalkeeper

(1) Dangerous Play



Playing in a dangerous or unsafe manner.

(1) Dangerous Play

Play should be considered dangerous when:

- the referee feels a player might be injured because of the way they or their opponent is playing;
- an opponent is unfairly affected by stopping their challenge for the ball to avoid causing or getting injured.



The referee should also consider player experience/skill level when looking at dangerous play.

- More skilled and experienced players, may wish to accept the danger of an act and continue playing compared to less skilled and experienced players.



Dangerous Play

USSOC



Playing Dangerously.

An action is considered dangerous play when an opponent is adversely or unfairly affected, usually by the opponent ceasing to challenge for the ball in order to avoid receiving or causing injury as a result of the action.



(2) Impeding



**Impeding the progress
of an opponent.**

Impeding the progress of an opponent means moving into their path to obstruct, block, slow down or force a change in direction when the ball is not within playing distance of either player.

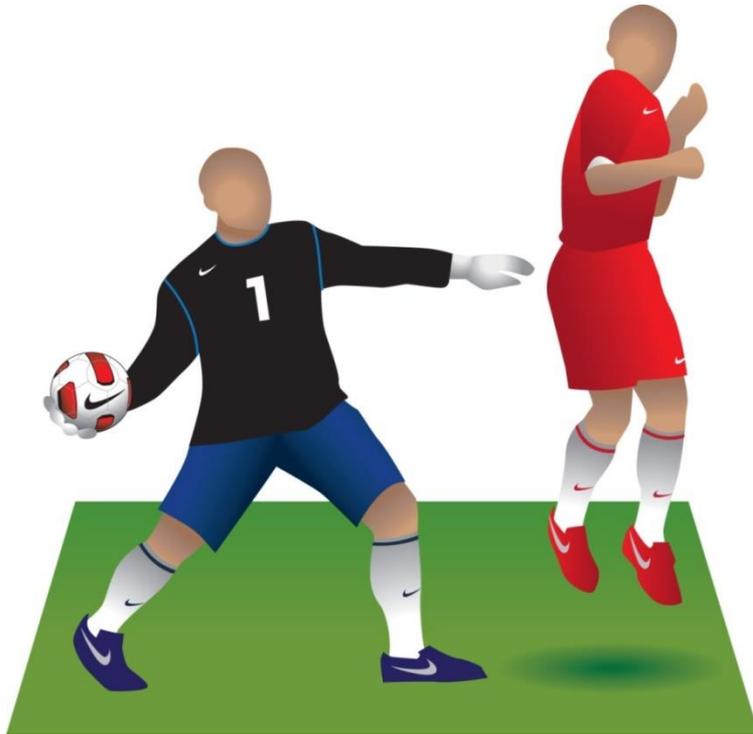
(2) Impeding



Impeding requires the ball not be within playing distance AND that there is no physical contact between the players.

When there is physical contact between the players, the offense is punishable by a direct free kick (DFK) being committed by one of the players.

(3) Preventing

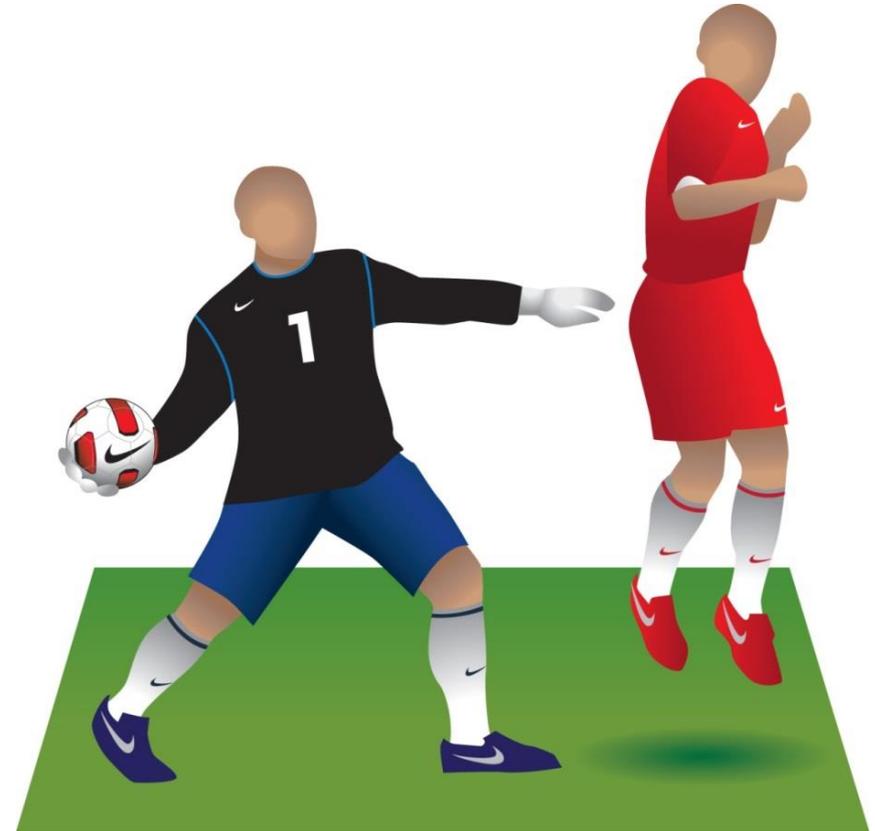


Preventing or hindering the goalkeeper from releasing the ball back into play

(3) Preventing

Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball with their hands.

This also includes if an opponent kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing the ball.





(3) Preventing

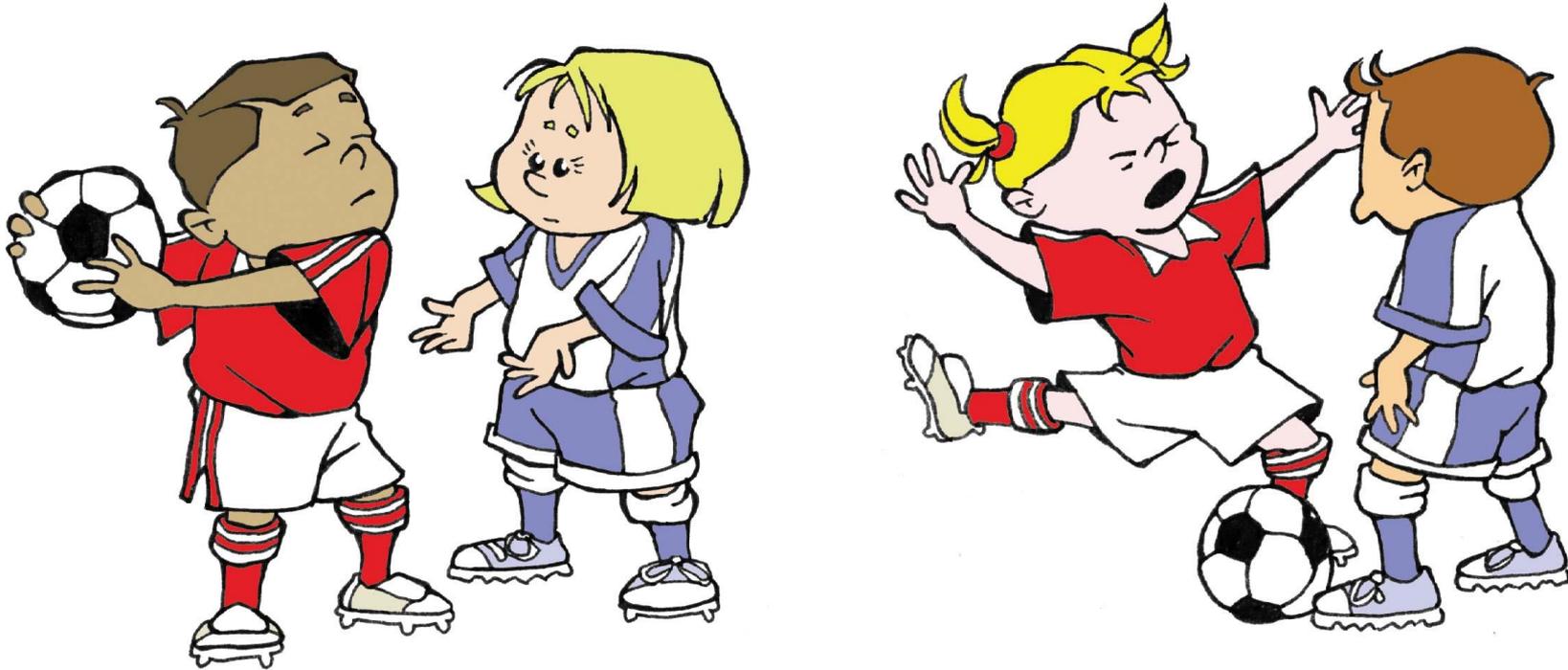
USSOC



This also includes interfering with a goalkeeper who is punting or attempting to punt the ball into play.

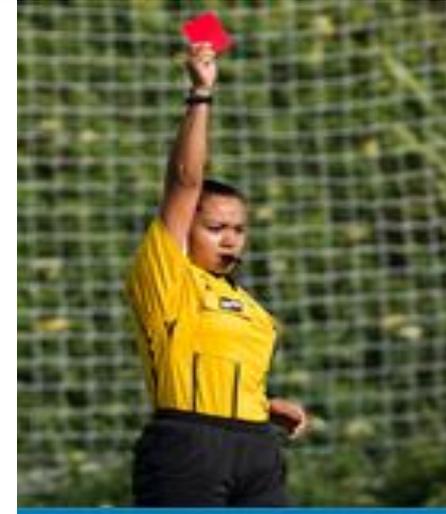


(4) Other Offenses



Committing any offense not specifically listed in Law 12.

(4) Other Offenses



If play is stopped solely for misconduct (no foul committed) for which a yellow or red card will be given, the restart is an IFK provided the misconduct was committed by a player on the field during play.



USSOC



Indirect Free Kick



The second group of four (4) indirect free kick (IFK) fouls are specific to the goalkeeper



Goalkeeper Possession

USSOC



A goalkeeper cannot be challenged for the ball by an opponent when in control of the ball with their hands.



Note: In this context the goalkeeper's hand is defined as any part of the hand (this may be the entire hand or just a single finger) or any part of the arm.



Goalkeeper Possession

USSOC



A goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball when:

- **the ball is between their hands or between the hand and any surface. Examples of this would be between a single hand and the ground or between a single hand and any part of their body;**
- **holding the ball in the outstretched hand;**
- **bouncing the ball on the ground or throwing it in the air to themselves.**



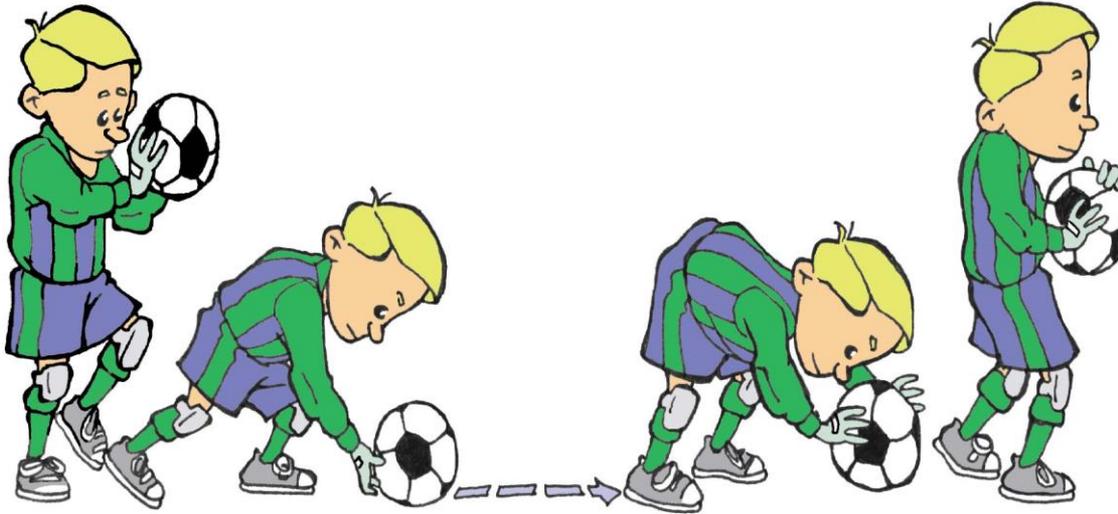
(5) 6 Seconds

The Goalkeeper holding onto the ball with their hands longer than 6 seconds before releasing it.



Note that because many small-sided and recreational games may not have goalkeepers or have players with specific goalkeeper training, referees should only enforce this in instances of blatant time wasting.

(6) Release and Handle



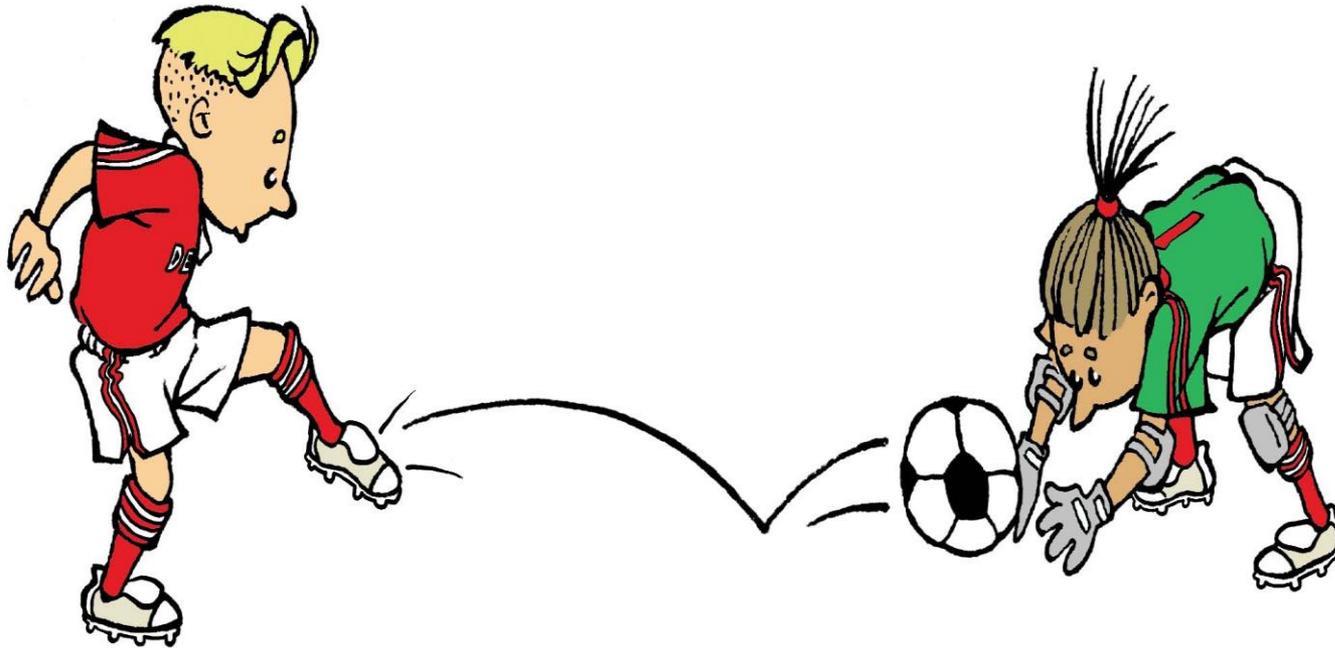
Goalkeeper touching the ball again with their hands after having deliberately released it into play and before it has touched another player.



USSOC



(7) Kick by Teammate



Goalkeeper touching the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a teammate.

(8) Throw-in by Teammate



Goalkeeper touching the ball with their hands after receiving it directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate.



USSOC

IFK Restart Location



The IFK is taken from the place where the offense occurred except for the following two exceptions:

- 1. An IFK awarded in the defensive goal area may be taken from any point inside the goal area.**
- 2. An IFK awarded to the attackers inside the opposing team's goal area must be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infraction occurred.**



USSOC



Deliberate Heading

- (1) If the ball makes contact with a player's head and the player has not deliberately played or attempted to play the ball, then play should continue as no offense has occurred.
- (2) A player shall not be cautioned nor sent-off for persistent infringement or denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity, as a result of a heading infraction.

Heading of the ball is allowed in U12 (11 years old) and older games without limitations.



USSOC



Deliberate Heading

Deliberate heading of the ball is NOT allowed in U11 (10 years old) and younger games.

- ❖ If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game with any portion of their head, an **indirect free kick (IFK)** is to be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense.
- ❖ If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the IFK should be taken on the goal area line at nearest point to where the infringement occurred.



USSOC



Review Question

64. What are the requirements of a foul?

- A. Action committed by a player against an opponent or opposing team
- B. Action committed on the field of play
- C. Action committed while the ball is in play
- D. All of the above



USSOC



Review Question

65. What is the correct restart if a player trips an opponent?

- A. Indirect free kick
- B. Direct free kick



Review Question

66. What is the correct restart if a player accidentally kicks an opponent?

- A. Indirect free kick
- B. Direct free kick
- C. No restart, allow play to continue



USSOC



Review Question

67. What is the correct restart if a player pushes an opponent?

- A. Indirect free kick
- B. Direct free kick



USSOC



Review Question

68. What is the correct restart if a player commits dangerous play?

- A. Indirect free kick
- B. Direct free kick



Review Question

69. How should the referee proceed if a player deliberately kicks at, but misses, an opponent in the center circle?

- A. Stop play and restart with a dropped ball
- B. Stop play and restart with an IFK
- C. Stop play and restart with a DFK
- D. Stop play and restart with a PK
- E. Allow play to continue



USSOC



Review Question

70. How should the referee restart play if a player commits a careless tackle on his own penalty area line?

- A. Dropped ball
- B. Indirect free kick
- C. Direct free kick
- D. Penalty kick



USSOC



Review Question

71. How should the referee restart play if a goalkeeper plays the ball her hands in the penalty area after it has been deliberately kicked to her by a teammate?

- A. Dropped ball
- B. Indirect free kick
- C. Direct free kick
- D. Penalty kick



Review Question

72. How should the referee restart play if a goalkeeper's hands cross the penalty area line into the penalty arc while holding the ball?

- A. Dropped ball
- B. Indirect free kick
- C. Direct free kick
- D. Penalty kick



USSOC



Review Question

73. How should the referee restart play if a player commits an impeding offense inside their own penalty area?

- A. Dropped ball
- B. Indirect free kick
- C. Direct free kick
- D. Penalty kick