



2021 Law changes

Explanation for NWSF Clubs

Summary of IFAB publication

Goal Kick - Law 16

- The ball is in play once the kick is taken; it does not have to leave the penalty area
- Attackers need to be outside the penalty area when the kick is taken.

Free Kicks / Penalty Kicks - Law 13 & 14

- Attackers must be 1m away from a defensive wall of 3 or more defenders.
- Free kicks in the penalty area are now in play once the kick is taken (same as goal kicks)
- The goalkeeper is warned for their 1st offence at a penalty kick. Subsequent offences are still punishable by YC (caution) and RC (sending-off).

Substitutes / Interchange - Law 3

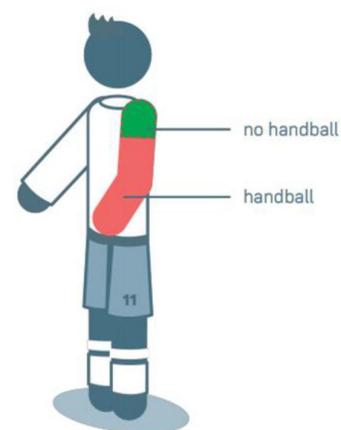
- A player who is being substituted must leave the field by the nearest point on the touchline/goal line (unless the referee indicates the player can leave quickly/immediately at the halfway line or a different point because of safety, injury etc.)
- The player coming on must still be at halfway and must not enter the field until the substituted player has left.

Dropped ball - Laws 8 & 9

- A dropped ball restart will still occur if play is stopped without a foul occurring while the ball is in play.
- A dropped ball restart will now also take place if the ball hits the referee and:
 - Team possession changes; or
 - A goal is scored; or
 - A promising attack starts
- The ball is now dropped to the team that had possession, or if it's in the penalty area, it is dropped to the goalkeeper. Dropped balls are no longer contested
- All other players must be 4m away from the dropped ball.

Handball - Law 12

- “Handball” is defined as the part of the arm below the armpit/sleeve of the shirt (See image on the right)
- The following ‘handball’ situations, even if accidental, will be a free kick:
 - The ball goes into the goal after touching an attacking player’s hand/arm
 - A player gains control/possession of the ball after it has touched their hand/arm and then immediately scores, or creates a goal-scoring opportunity
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm which has made their body unnaturally bigger
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm when it is above their shoulder (unless the player has deliberately played the ball which then touches their hand/arm)
- The following will not usually be a free kick, unless they are one of the above situations:
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm directly from their own head/body/foot or the head/body/foot of another player who is close/near
 - The ball touches a player’s hand/arm which is close to their body and has not made their body unnaturally bigger
 - If a player is falling and the ball touches their hand/arm when it is between their body and the ground to support the body (but not extended to make the body bigger)
 - If the goalkeeper attempts to ‘clear’ (release into play) a throw-in or deliberate kick from a team-mate but the ‘clearance’ fails, the goalkeeper can then handle the ball



Fouls and Misconduct – Law 12

- If a quick free kick is taken/advantage is played for a DOGSO (denying obvious goal-scoring opportunity) offence, the player is cautioned.
- If a quick free kick is taken/advantage is played for a SPA (stopping a promising attack) offence, no card is issued.

Team Officials - Laws 5 & 12

- A team official guilty of misconduct will be shown a YC (caution) or RC (sending-off); if the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach who is in the technical area at the time will receive the YC/RC.

More detail, some other minor changes, and explanation on the thinking behind each change can be found at [The FA 2020/21 Law Changes Explained](#)