

Interpretation
of the Laws of
the Game and
Guidelines for Referees

Substitution procedure

- A substitution may be made only during a stoppage in play
- The assistant referee signals that a substitution has been requested
- The player being substituted receives the referee's permission to leave the field of play, unless he is already off the field of play for reasons that comply with the Laws of the Game
- The referee gives the substitute permission to enter the field of play
- Before entering the field of play, the substitute waits for the player he is replacing to leave the field
- The player being substituted is not obliged to leave the field of play on the halfway line
- Permission to proceed with a substitution may be refused under certain circumstances, e.g. if the substitute is not ready to enter the field of play
- A substitute who has not completed the substitution procedure by setting foot on to the field of play cannot restart play by taking a throw-in or corner kick
- If a player who is about to be replaced refuses to leave the field of play, play continues
- If a substitution is made during the half-time interval or before extra time, the procedure is to be completed before the second half or extra time kicks off

Extra persons on the field of play

Outside agents

Anyone not indicated on the team list as a player, substitute or team official is deemed to be an outside agent, as is a player who has been sent off.

If an outside agent enters the field of play:

- the referee must stop play (although not immediately if the outside agent does not interfere with play)
- the referee must have him removed from the field of play and its immediate surroundings
- if the referee stops the match, he must restart play with a dropped ball from the position of the ball when the match was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped

Team officials

The coach and other officials indicated on the team list (with the exception of players or substitutes) are deemed to be team officials.

If a team official enters the field of play:

- the referee must stop play (although not immediately if the team official does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- the referee must have him removed from the field of play and if his behaviour is irresponsible, the referee must expel him from the field of play and its immediate surroundings
- if the referee stops the match, he must restart play with a dropped ball from the position of the ball when the match was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped

Player outside the field of play

If, after leaving the field of play to correct unauthorised equipment or kit, to be treated for an injury or bleeding, because he has blood on his kit or for any other reason with the referee's permission, a player re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission, the referee must:

- stop play (although not immediately if the player does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- caution the player for entering the field of play without permission
- order the player to leave the field of play if necessary (e.g. infringement of Law 4)

If the referee stops play, it must be restarted:

- with an indirect free kick for the opposing team from the position of the ball when play was stopped (see Law 13 – Position of free kick) if there is no other infringement
- in accordance with Law 12 if the player infringes this Law

If a player accidentally crosses one of the boundary lines of the field of play, he is not deemed to have committed an infringement. Going off the field of play may be considered to be part of a playing movement.

Substitute or substituted player

If a substitute or a substituted player enters the field of play without permission:

- the referee must stop play (although not immediately if the player in question does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- the referee must caution him for unsporting behaviour
- the player must leave the field of play

If the referee stops play, it must be restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team from the position of the ball when play was stopped (see Law 13 – Position of free kick).

Goal scored with an extra person on the field of play

If, after a goal is scored, the referee realises, before play restarts, that there was an extra person on the field of play when the goal was scored:

- the referee must disallow the goal if:
 - the extra person was an outside agent and he interfered with play
 - the extra person was a player, substitute, substituted player or team official associated with the team that scored the goal
- the referee must allow the goal if:
 - the extra person was an outside agent who did not interfere with play
 - the extra person was a player, substitute, substituted player or team official associated with the team that conceded the goal

Minimum number of players

If the rules of a competition state that all of the players and substitutes must be named before kick-off and a team begins a match with fewer than 11 players, only the players named in the starting line-up may complete the 11 upon their arrival.

Although a match may not START if either team consists of fewer than seven players, the minimum number of players in a team required for a match to CONTINUE is left to the discretion of member associations. However, it is the opinion of the International F.A. Board that a match should not continue if there are fewer than seven players in either team.

If a team has fewer than seven players because one or more players has deliberately left the field of play, the referee is not obliged to stop the match and the advantage may be played. In such cases, the referee must not allow the match to resume after the ball has gone out of play if a team does not have the minimum number of seven players.