

LAW 11 – OFFSIDE

The Three Fundamental Elements of the Offside Law

Fact: POSITION

Is the player

1. *In the Opponents' half of the field*
2. *Ahead of the ball, and*
3. *Ahead of the second last opponent?*

('Ahead' means 'closer to the opponents' goal line')

A player in his own half of the field of play is not in an offside position.

A player who is even with or behind the ball is not in an offside position.

Judgment: TIME

When is a player's position judged?

At the moment the ball is touched or played by a teammate.

It is the position of the player at the instant the ball is touched or played by a teammate that must be judged, not the player's position at the time the ball is received.

A player who is in an onside position at the instant a teammate shoots or passes the ball to the player does not become offside if he goes forward during the flight of the ball.

Opinion: PARTICIPATION

Does the player Participate?

A player in an offside position must not be penalized unless he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

- Interfering with play, or
- Interfering with an opponent, or
- Gaining an advantage by being in that offside position.

Merely being in an offside position is NOT a violation of the Laws.

EXCEPTIONS

It is not an offense when a player in an offside position receives the ball directly from a:

- goal kick
- corner kick
- throw-in

Assistant referees are to signal for offside, NOT offside position.

How is play restarted when a player is called offside?

An indirect free kick is taken by the opposing team from the place where the offside player was when the teammate played the ball.
If the infringement occurs inside the goal area, the free kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area.

PARTICIPATION is the key element of the Offside Law. The *Laws of the Game* are intended to keep the game flowing. Stopping the game to penalize a player in an offside position who is not actively participating violates both the spirit of the Law and the letter of the Law. It is not an offense in itself to be in an offside position. Prior to World Cup USA '94, FIFA instructed the referees and linesmen (now called 'assistant referees') to only signal for offside when absolutely certain that a violation has occurred. These instructions are now taught by FIFA instructors throughout the world, and they apply at every level of soccer. When in

Although the Law states that (to be called offside) a player must interfere with play or an opponent, or gain an advantage *at the moment the ball touches or is played by a teammate*, that is not how the Law is applied. A player's offside *position* is determined at that time. If the player subsequently gains an advantage directly from that play, offside may be called. For example, if a teammate takes a shot and the ball deflects from a goalpost, cross bar or the goalkeeper to a player who was in an offside position when the ball was played, the offside is still sanctioned. The free kick is taken from where the offside player was at the moment his teammate played the ball.