



Commonly Misunderstood Youth Soccer Rules

Many parents, and sometimes newer coaches, can run into soccer rules that are not well understood. Here are some simple explanations for a few commonly misunderstood rules.

As parents, it is wise to remember two things:

- 1 - Spectators have no role in the conduct of the game, and the only discussion with referees is from the team, not parents
- 2 - All referee game calls are final - no appeals

Offside

This is the most controversial and hard to understand rule as it involves multiple parts. A player is offside when:

- 1) They are past the second-to-last defender (goalie is the last defender)
- 2) The attacker is in the Opposing half (can't be offside in your own half)
- 3) The call is made based on the players position at the moment the ball was passed
- 4) The player is actively involved in the play



Advantage Rule

The advantage rule is when the referee allows play to go on despite a minor foul, when it's to the advantage of the team in possession. This is often confused with the referee missing a foul.

An example would be where a defender pushes an attacking player who then falls, but the attacking team keeps the ball and is in position to score. Calling the foul would actually hurt the attacking team.



Slide Tackles

A slide tackle is a perfectly legal play. A foul can be called when the play is dangerous, like when the defender makes contact with the opponent first before the ball, or makes the tackle "cleats up".



In youth soccer, some leagues will ban slide tackling for younger players because they lack the skills to consistently do it the right way, and are reducing the risk of injury. However, as players age, leagues and referees begin to allow slide tackling.

Hand Ball Fouls (Handling)

HANDBALL!!! The cry goes up from parents and players and coaches often all together every time a ball contacts an opposing players arm. Not so fast. The Referees allow play to continue. Why?



HANDLING is when a player uses his/her arms deliberately or has placed his/her arms up where contact is likely. If a ball is struck and hits a player in the arm, for example, where they have no time to move or react, there is no foul. The key word is DELIBERATE.

Shoulder Tackle (Charge)

"Hey Ref! He just ran into our player. That's a foul!"

Well, maybe not. Soccer is a contact sport and sometimes physical contact is specifically allowed. A shoulder tackle is where two opposing players are running near a playable ball and one uses shoulder-to-shoulder contact to push his opponent off the ball. This is a non-reckless "fair charge" and perfectly legal.

All players should learn the physical aspects of the game!

Indirect Kick

In a game, a foul is called and players set up for a free kick. The attacking team shoots and the ball goes directly into the net. The referee indicates "No Goal" and the defending team gets the ball. What happened?

An indirect free kick is given generally for non-reckless fouls or rules violations. The free kick is awarded but in this case must touch another player before a goal can be scored.



Ball Out of Play

There can be some confusion regarding the sideline or goal line and the ball being out of play. Spectators will frequently state that the ball is out. However, the rule is quite clear and simple. A ball is out of play only when it is ENTIRELY out. Any part of the ball still on the line means the ball is still in play, even if just 5%! The person in the best position to judge this is the referee linesman.



The same is true for a goal line – the ball must be entirely over the line for a goal.