



8U Official Course

For officiating 6U, 7U and 8U games

AYSO National Referee Program | 2026–2027

Instructors

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Logistics

- Bathrooms: hallway
- Emergency exits: front door, back door
- Cell phones: Silent and put away

General Schedule

Time	Topics
8:00 – 9:20	Instruction
9:20 – 9:35	BREAK
9:35 – 11:00	Instruction
11:00 – 11:35	Exam and review
11:35 – 12:00	Conclusion

Major Topics

- Introduction to soccer and AYSO
- Understanding younger players
- Referee's role
- Pre-game duties
- Starting, stopping, and restarting play
- Post-game duties
- Referee communication



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Introduction to soccer and AYSO

with Region 13



What is the game of soccer about?

- A field, a ball, two teams of players
- The team with the ball tries to score by kicking the ball into the other team's goal
- Team without ball tries to stop other team from scoring

Did you know that AYSO is the world's biggest soccer club?

- The American Youth Soccer Organization was established in Torrance, California in 1964 with just nine teams and the dream of bringing soccer to American children.
- Sixty years later, AYSO continues to provide programs across the country, making AYSO a model among youth sports programs.

AYSO Philosophies

- Everyone Plays[®]
- Balanced Teams
- Open Registration
- Positive Coaching
- Good Sportsmanship
- Player Development

Everyone Plays[®]



- AYSO's goal is for kids to play soccer, so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.



Everyone Plays®

Everyone Plays In our Communities



Balanced Teams

Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible, providing a stronger learning experience for teams as they play teams comprised of similar ability.



Open Registration

- Open to all children between 3 and 18 years of age who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.
- Some regions have EPIC programs that provide a quality soccer experience for those with physical or mental disabilities.



Positive Coaching



POSITIVE
INSTRUCTIONAL
ENCOURAGING

- AYSO requires coaches to create a positive experience for every player in AYSO.
- Encouraging players' effort leads to greater enjoyment, improved skills and stronger motivation in players.

Good Sportsmanship

We strive to create a positive environment based on mutual respect rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our programs are designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

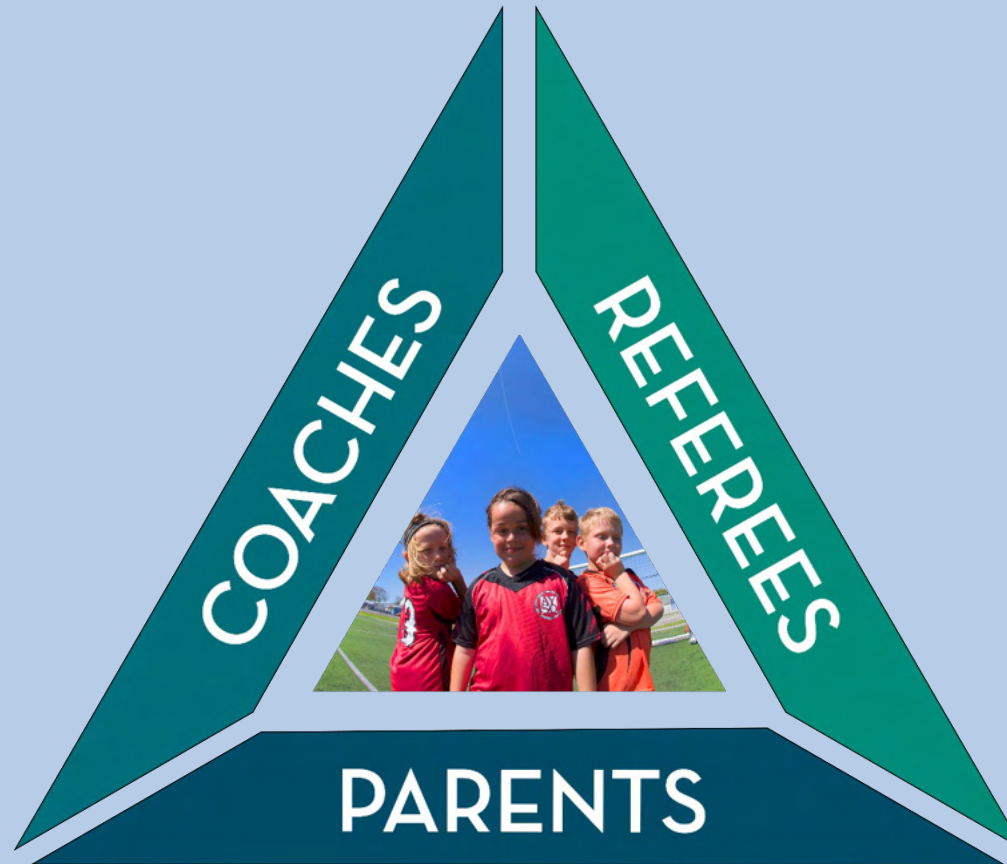


Player Development

All players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.



AYSO Team



AYSO Team Rules

- Work together
- Help each other
- Protect each other
- Do your best
- Know your role

Rules Used By AYSO

International Football Association Board
(IFAB) Laws of the Game

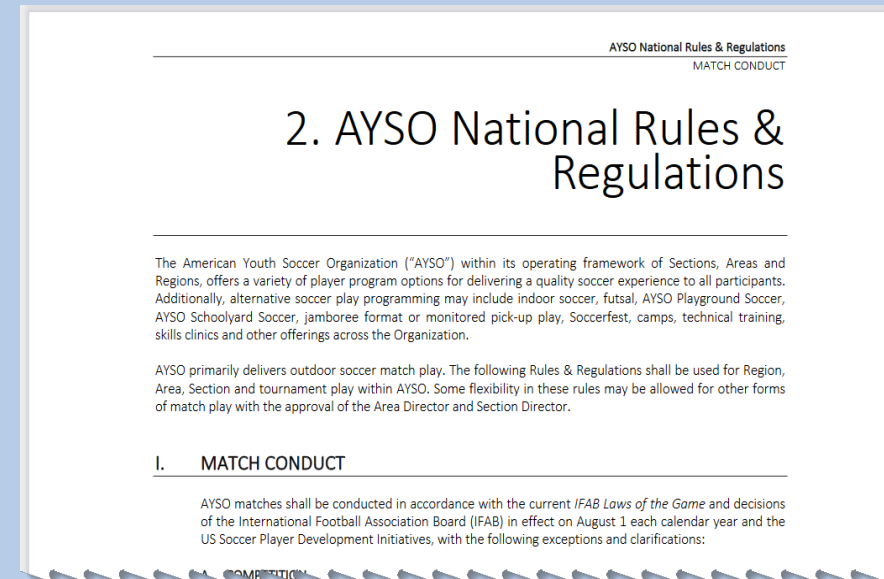
theIFAB.com

PDF and mobile app



AYSO National Rules & Regulations

https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/AYSO_Reference_Book



Rule Simplifications for Younger Players

- Smaller fields
- Smaller balls
- Smaller goals
- Fewer players on the field (“small-sided games”)
- Shorter halves
- No goalkeepers
- No offside



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Understanding Younger Players



Know Your Audience

- About 6–8 years old
- Knowing audience provides context as to how to officiate games



6U Players

- Motor skills are still developing changes
- Lots of energy, but in bursts
- Can't sit still long
- Craves praise and attention
- Fearful of unknowns
- Rapid and unpredictable mood
- Disposition to telling tall tales
- Lacks judgment regarding own safety/abilities
- Asks lots of questions

8U Players

- Eye-hand coordination has improved
- 8U can now balance on one foot
- Friendship is important
- Afraid of failure
- Starting to compare self to others
- Self-esteem and self concept a big issue
- Quick to tattle
- Starting to grasp the Team concept
- Treats every little mistake as a major crime

Younger Players in General

- Soccer experience
- Physical skill
- Endurance
- Self-awareness
- Sense of fairness
- Enthusiasm



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Referee's Role



Job of Referee

- Enforce the Laws of the Game as applied to 6-8U games. The decisions of the referee are final.
- Is the official time-keeper.



Job of Referee

- Enforce the spirit of the Laws of the Game, which is summarized in three words:

Safe Fair Fun



Job of Referee

- Emphasis is “Safe, Fair, Fun,” especially in younger players' games, rather than getting wrapped up in technicalities.
- Unique to soccer, referees are advised to ignore trifling or doubtful offenses.



Characteristics of a Referee for Younger Players

- Friendly
- Instructive
- Helpful
- Encouraging
- Patient

Dealing with Coaches and Spectators

- Remain calm and professional
- Maintain control of your emotions
- Use the AYSO Team concept to enlist cooperation
- Intervene early to prevent escalation (a smile, wink or look can defuse a bad situation)
- Keep adults focused on creating an enjoyable experience for players





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Pre-Game Duties and Activities

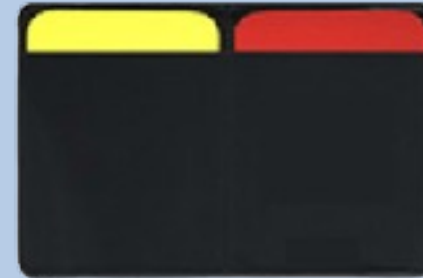


Arrive Early

- At least 20 minutes prior to game time
- In proper uniform



Have Required Equipment

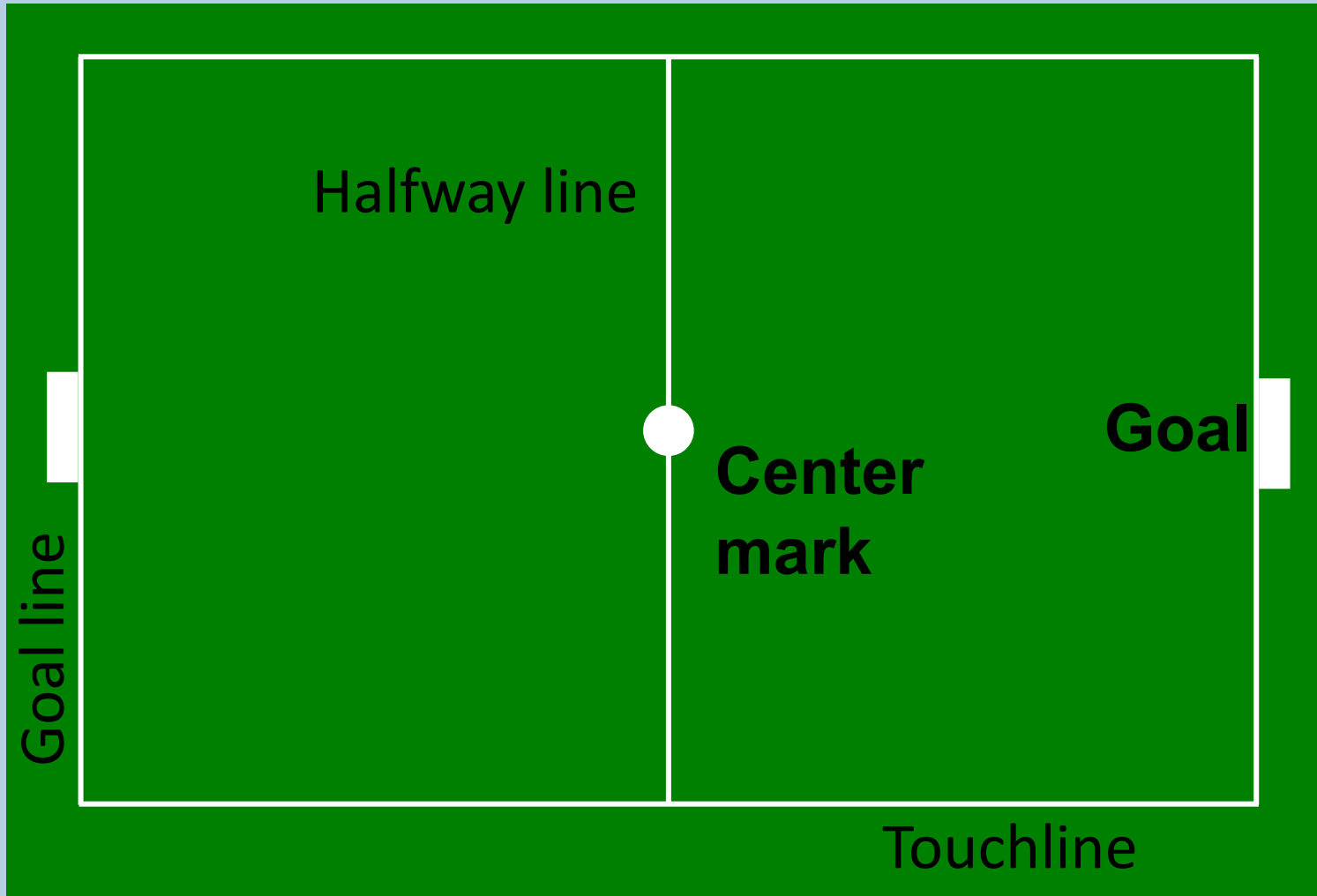


Meet Coaches

- Introduce yourself
- Learn their names
- Be friendly



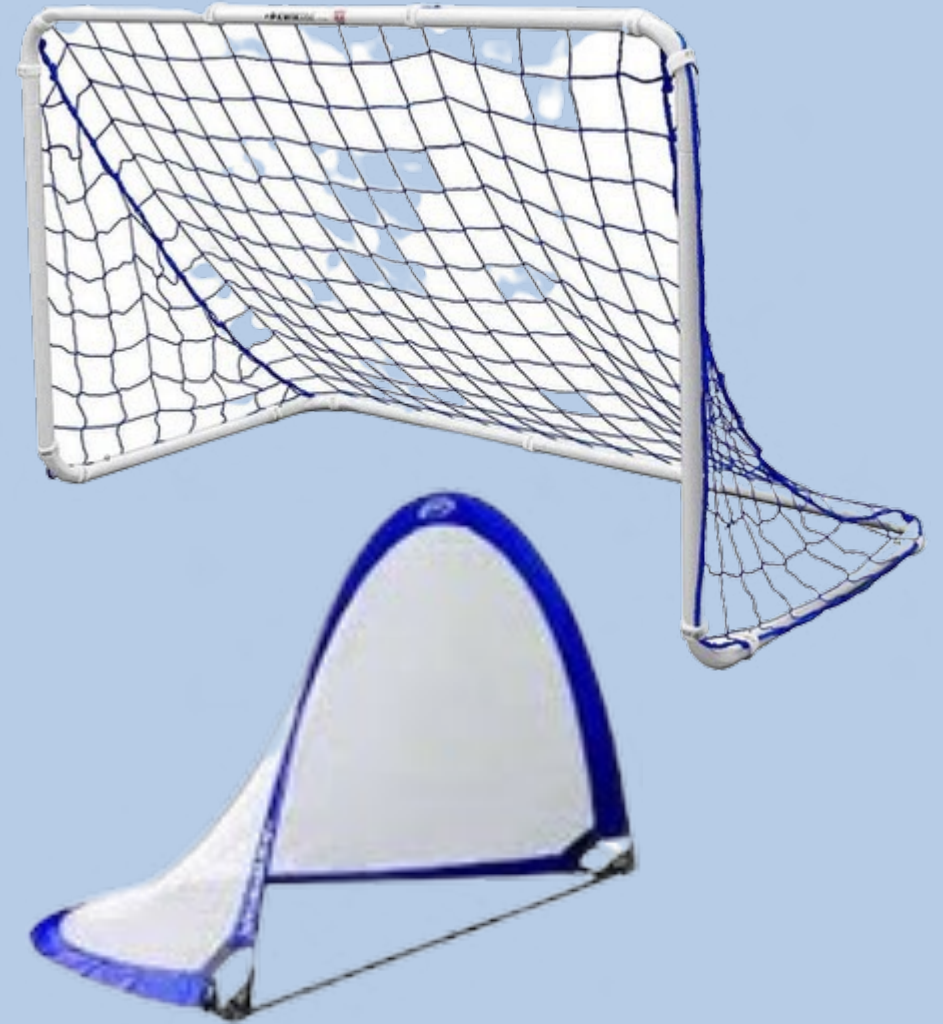
Field of Play for 6–8U



Field set-up may vary by Region depending on how the Region runs 6–8U games.

Inspect Field and Equipment

- Markings
- Holes, glass, rocks, debris, etc.
- Goals
- Ball



Inspect the Ball

- Size 3
- Spherical and safe - Not torn, no rough edges, no protrusions
- Firm, but yields about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to thumb pressure

Inspect Players

- **Shirt, Shorts, Socks**

- If player is missing a uniform piece, let them play but remind them to bring it next time

- **Shoes**

- Must wear safe closed-toe shoes — soccer or athletic shoes are both fine

- **Shinguards**

- Required
- Must be completely under socks (may not roll sock over shinguard)

Inspect Players

- No casts or splints (even if padded) – casts and splints may NOT be removed in order to play
- Knee braces are okay, but only if padded and safe to all players (in your opinion)
- No jewelry of any kind – this includes necklaces, earrings, bracelets (including friendship bracelets), anything hard sticking out in the hair (AYSO has exceptions for beads), etc. No taping over jewelry.

Inspect Players

- Medical alert bracelets allowed but must be secured to player with tape, cloth wristband or something similar that is safe. The information must remain visible.
- Nothing dangerous in the opinion of the Referee.

Conduct Coin Toss

- Call for captains
- Brief introductions (no lectures)
- Referee picks a captain to call the coin toss
- Referee tosses the coin
- Winner of coin toss chooses either which goal to attack OR to kick off



Review

Check For Understanding



How many philosophies does AYSO have?

Six

Name the six AYSO Philosophies.

**Everyone Plays
Balanced Teams
Open Registration**

**Positive Coaching
Good Sportsmanship
Player Development**

What acronym is used to describe how coaches are to behave with their players?

PIE

What does PIE stand for?

Positive

Instructional

Encouraging

Who are the 3 members of the AYSO Team?



Parents – Coaches – Referees

What three words embody the spirit of the Laws of the Game?



SAFE

FAIR

FUN

According to the AYSO National Rules & Regulations, what is the minimum amount of time each team member must play?

Half the game (two “quarters”)



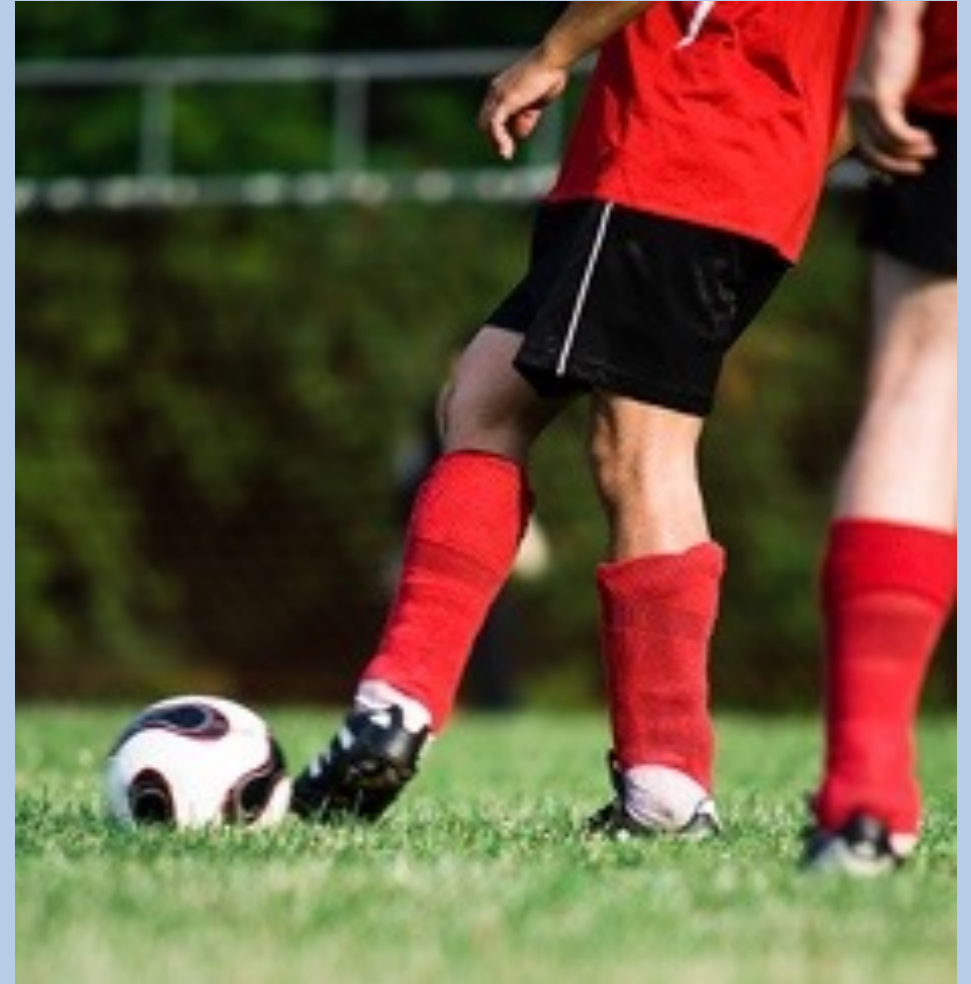
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How to Start the Game



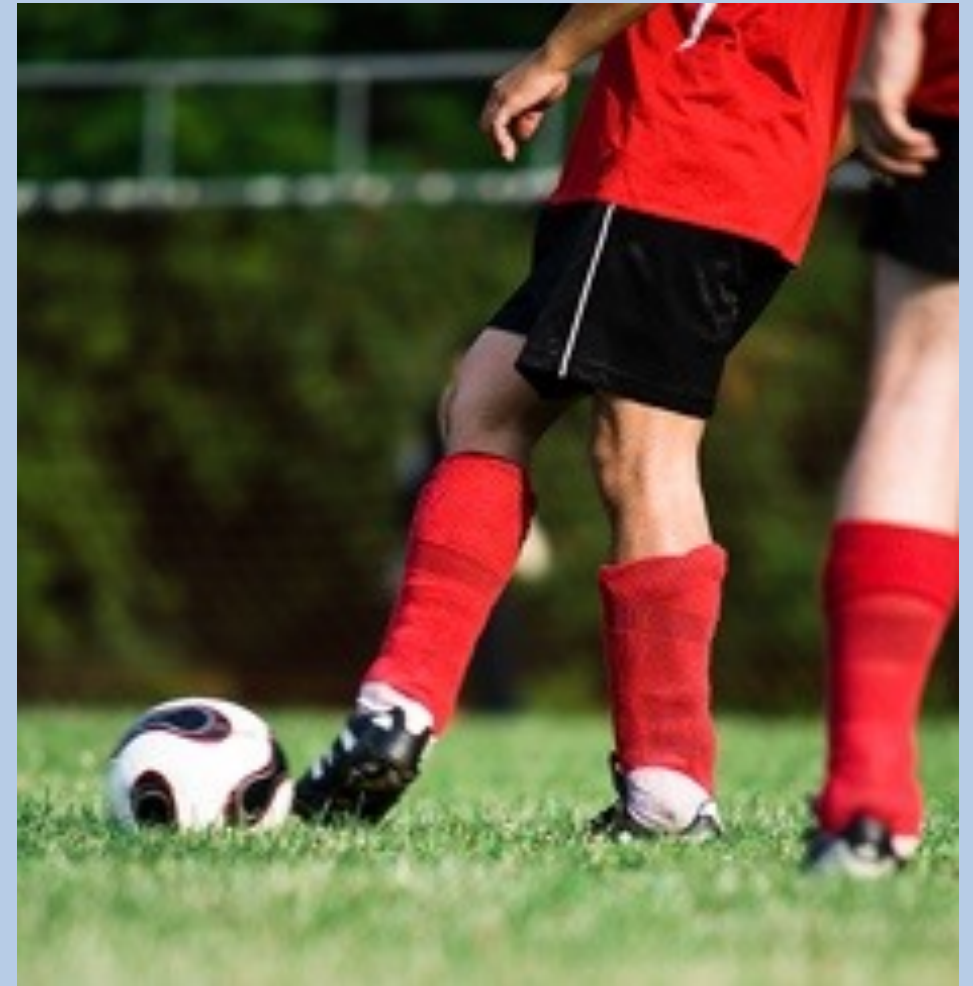
Kick-Off

- To start each half
- After a goal is scored



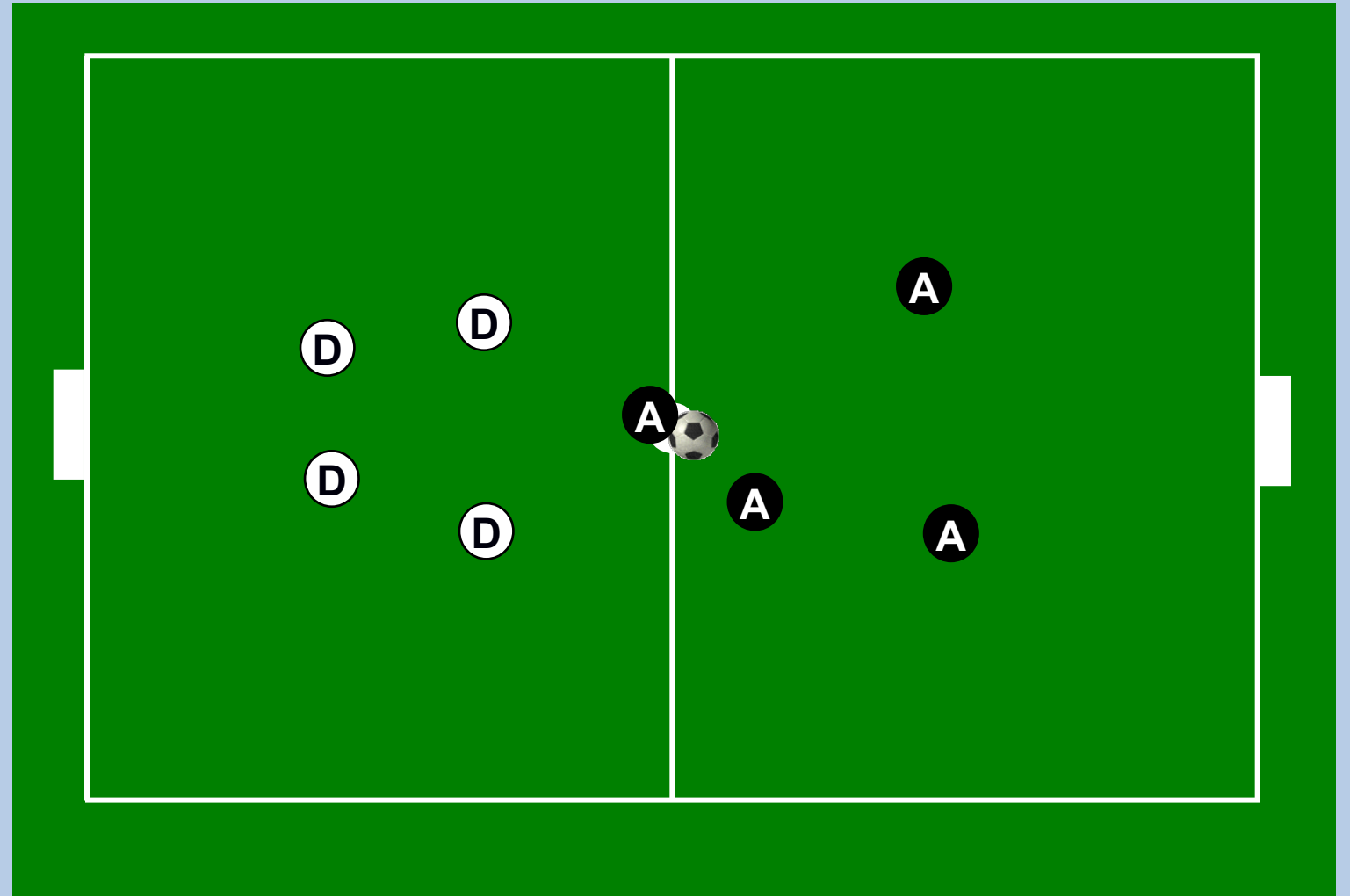
Kick-Off

- Verify correct number of players on field (no visible or audible counting).
- 6–8U games:
 - 4 v 4, no goalkeeper



Kick-Off

- All players on their own half —except the kicker
- Defenders at least 5 yards from ball



Kick-Off

- Ball stationary on center mark
- Referee blows whistle to start play
- Ball in play when kicked and clearly moves
- A goal can be scored directly against opponents
- Kicker cannot play ball second time until ball touched by another player

Keeping Time

- Time officially starts when ball has been put into play.
- Match divided into two equal halves:
 - 6U — 16 minutes each (32 minutes total)
 - 7U — 20 minutes each (40 minutes total)
 - 8U — 20 minutes each (40 minutes total)
- Clock runs continuously through each half.
- Half-time: 5–10 minutes

Review

Check For Understanding



True or False

It is not necessary to check the field prior to the start of the match if it is the last game of the day.

False

During the field inspection, the Referee notices that a goal is being held in place by two bricks placed on the back of the structure. What should the Referee do?

Referee should inform the coaches that the goals need to be securely anchored before the match can start.

During the safety inspection of the players, the Referee notices that a player is wearing earrings. The player explains that their ears were pierced the previous day and if the earrings are removed the holes will close. What should the Referee do?

The Referee should explain to the player that earrings are not permitted; if they wish to play, the earrings must be removed. The Referee may choose to involve the coach.

The team that wins the coin toss chooses _____
?



**Either which goal to attack
OR
to kick off**

Where should the players be on a kick-off?

**Each team must be in its own half of the field—
except the kicker.**

**The team that is not taking the kick-off must be
at least 5 yards from the ball.**



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Stopping The Game



When Does Play Stop

Play stops naturally when:

- Ball obviously leaves field, including when goal is scored

When Does Play Stop



Play also stops when the Referee stops it (by blowing the whistle):

- If the ball leaves the field or a goal is scored, but the players keep playing
- Foul / technical offenses
- Injury
- Substitution
- Outside interference
- Time expires (each half)

Ball leaves field

- The ball's position determines whether it is in or out of play
- Not the player's position

Ball Leaves the Field

IN

In play



In play



Touchline or goal line

Field lines
are part of
area they define

OUT

Either in air or on ground

In play



Out of play

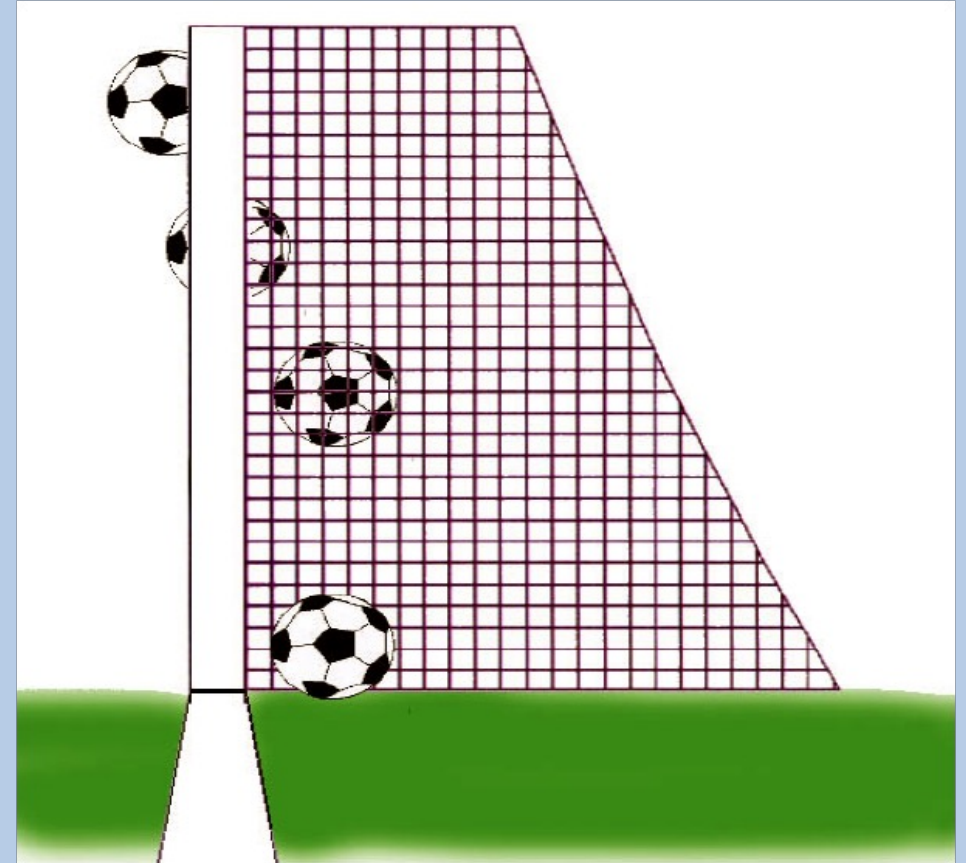


When is a Goal Scored?

A goal is scored

When the whole ball crosses over the whole goal line, between the goalposts and beneath the crossbar.

It does not matter which team put it there.



Foul Committed



Common in 8U and younger age groups:

- Kicking an opponent
- Tripping an opponent
- Pushing an opponent
- Holding an opponent
- Handball (deliberate)
- Playing in a dangerous manner

Technical Offense

AYSO Safety Policy

- Players at 12U and below may not deliberately head the ball
- Unintentional contact between the ball and head may happen
 - Unintentional contact is okay – just make sure the player is not injured



Technical Offense



“Double touch” rule

The player who put the ball into play cannot touch it again until it has been touched by any other player

Injuries

- When to stop: anytime/ immediately
- In younger players' games, err on the side of caution. Stop sooner than later.
- Always if you suspect a head injury



Injuries



If player is injured and leaves field, with Referee's permission:

Coach can decide if their team will play short (fewer than number normally on the field) until player returns to field, with Referee's permission

or

Coach can substitute for injured player.

Blood on Player or Uniform

- Player must leave field until allowed to return, with Referee's permission
- Blood on body must be removed
- Blood on clothing must be neutralized
- It is the Coach's responsibility to address the issue(s)
- It is the Referee's responsibility to verify

Substitutions



Four opportunities:

1. About midway through first half
2. Halftime
3. About midway through second half
4. Injury (for injured player)

Outside Interference

Unusual reasons for stopping play

- Dog on the field
- Extra ball or non-player on field
- Ball hits referee and gives a team an advantage
- Etc.



Weather Safety

- Thunder and lightning: “Hear it, fear it; see it, flee it.”
 - If you see lightning or hear thunder, suspend the game until at least 30 minutes has passed since last lightning or thunder.
- Hot days: Be sure players get adequate hydration opportunities.

Time Expires

- At end of first half
- At the end of game

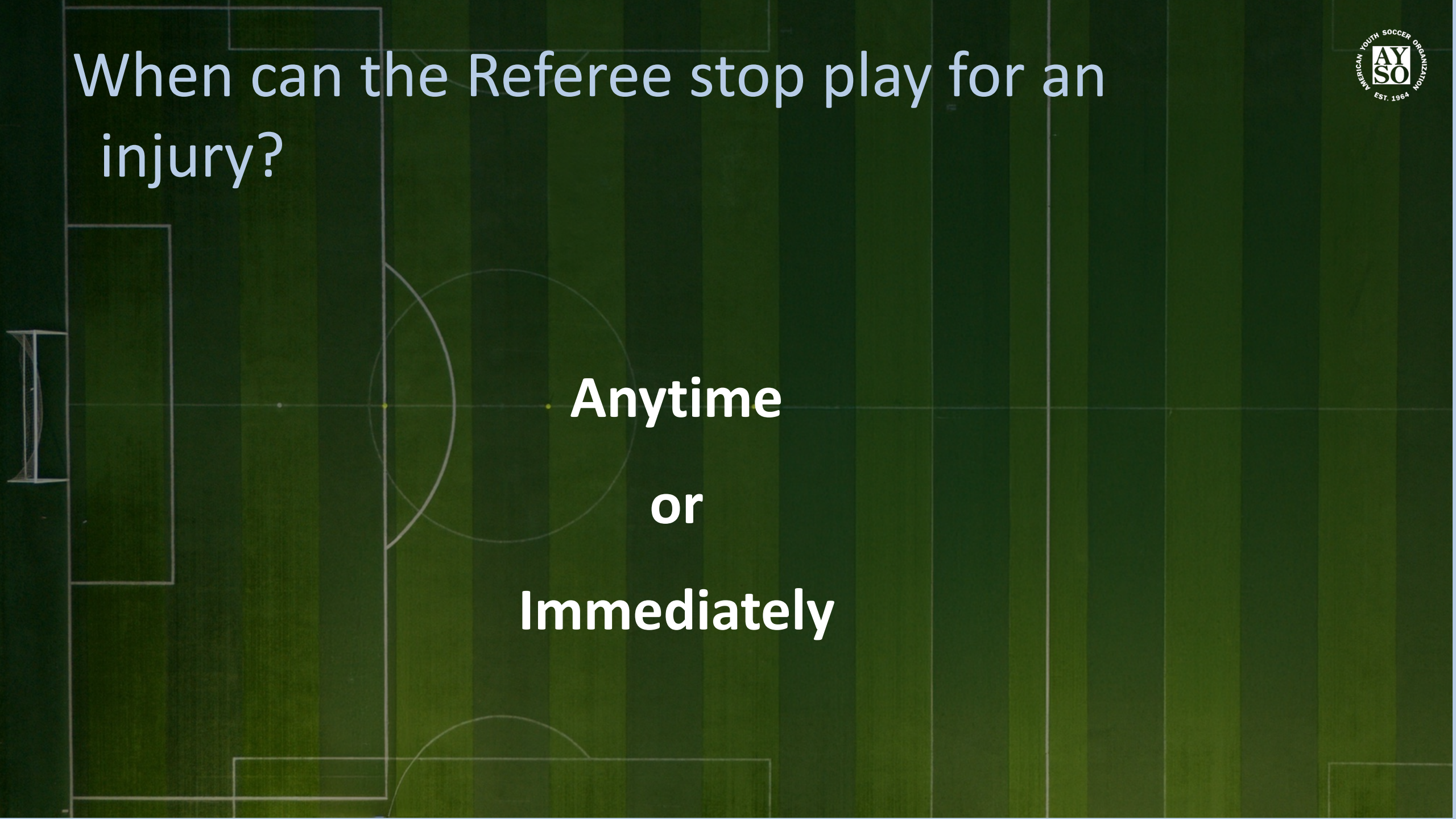
The referee is the official timekeeper.



Review

Check For Understanding



A faint, light-colored soccer field is visible in the background of the slide. The field includes the center circle, the halfway line, and the goal areas. The overall color scheme is dark green with white lines.

When can the Referee stop play for an injury?

**Anytime
or
Immediately**

True or False

A player dribbling the ball steps over the line. The ball is out of play.

False

It's the position of the ball (not the player) that determines whether the ball is in play or not.

Is this ball IN or OUT of play?

IN

OUT



IN PLAY



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Restarting The Game



Restarting The Game

Overview



Reason for stoppage	How to restart
Goal scored	Kick-off
Ball leaves field and was not a goal	Pass-in or throw-in, goal kick, or corner kick
Foul / technical offense	Indirect free kick
Injury or outside interference	Dropped ball

Pass-In / Dribble-In / Throw-In

- Per the LOTG, when the ball passes out of play over a touchline, the restart is a throw-in.
- Per AYSO National Rules & Regulations
 - For 6U, the throw-in is replaced with the pass-in (also called a kick-in), but a dribble-in is also allowed
 - For 8U, each region shall have the discretion to use either throw-ins or pass-ins or dribble-ins to restart play

Pass-In / Dribble-In / Throw-In

- When the ball goes out of play over a touchline
 - Taken by opponents of team that last touched ball
 - Taken at touchline from about where ball left field

Regions may decide to use throw-in for 8U players.

Pass-In

- Opposing players must be at least 5 yards from the point of pass-in
- Ball is in play as soon as it is kicked and clearly moves
- Player taking the pass-in may instead dribble in



Pass-In

- Once in play, the ball may be played again by the same player taking the pass-in (or dribble-in)
- A goal may not be scored directly from a pass-in



Throw-In



Regions may decide to use throw-in for 8U players.

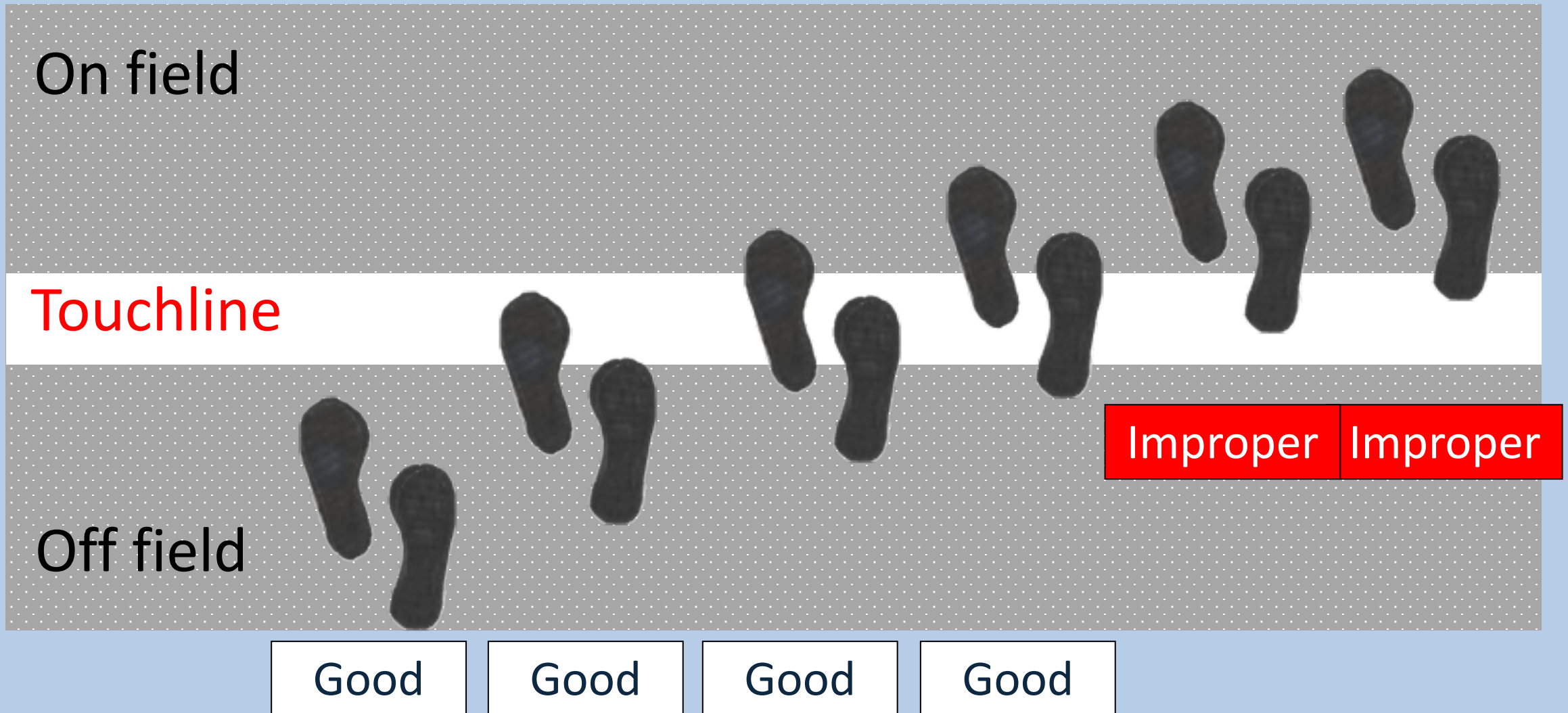
- When ball passes out of play over a touchline, restart with throw-in.
- Taken by opponents of team that last touched ball
- Taken from about where ball left field
- Opposing players at least 5 yards from point of throw; can't distract or impede thrower

Throw-In

At moment of delivering ball, thrower must:

- Face field of play
- Have part of each foot touching ground either on or behind touchline
- Use both hands to deliver ball from behind and over head

Throw-In: Feet Placement

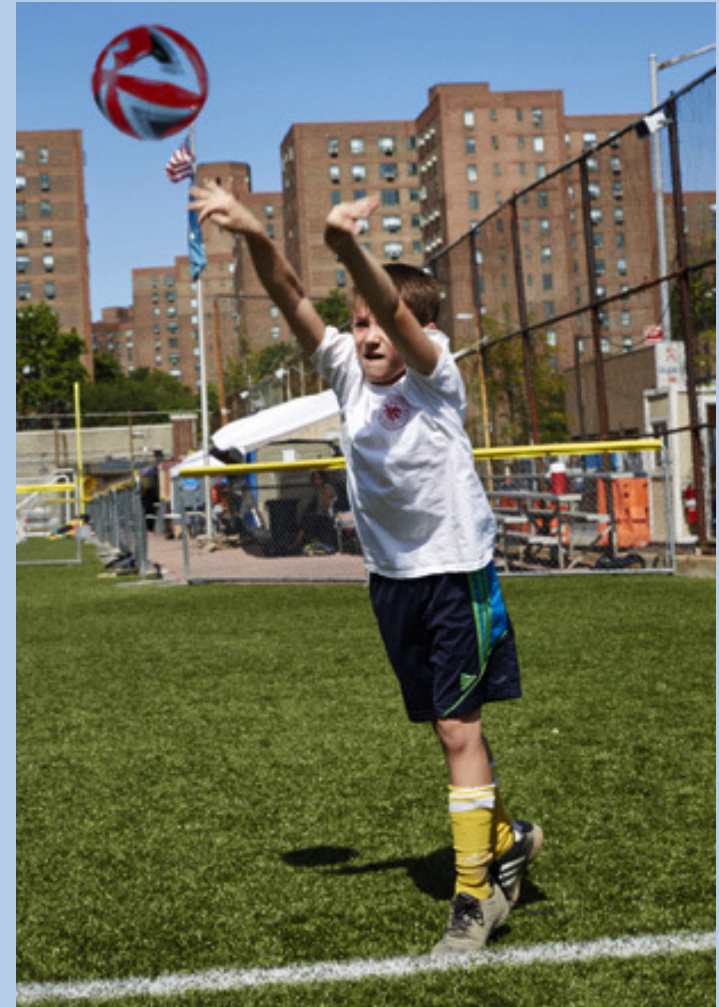


Throw-In



Throw-In

- Ball in play as soon as released and any portion of it is over outside edge of touchline
- Thrower may not touch ball second time until other player touches it
- Goal may not be scored directly



Goal Kick or Corner Kick

- When whole ball passes over goal line and no goal is scored, play is restarted with either...
 - Goal kick for defending team, or
 - Corner kick for attacking team.
 - ...depending on which team touched ball last.

Goal Kick

Play is restarted with a goal kick when whole ball passes over goal line, last touched by attacker, and a goal is not scored.

- Ball placed in general vicinity of goal
- Opponents must at least 5 yards away

Goal Kick

- Ball in play when kicked and clearly moves
- Kicker cannot touch ball second time until touched by another player
- Can score goal directly against opponents

Corner Kick

Play is restarted with a corner kick when whole ball passes over goal line, last touched by defender, and a goal is not scored.

- Ball placed in vicinity of nearest corner
- Opponents must be at least 5 yards from ball

Corner Kick

- Ball in play when kicked and clearly moves
- Kicker cannot touch ball second time until touched by other player
- Can score directly against opponents

Indirect Free Kick

When Referee stops play because of a foul or technical offense, restart is indirect free kick

ALL free kicks in 6–8U are indirect: cannot score directly.
No direct free kicks in 6–8U.

- Taken from location of foul or technical offense.
- But no closer than 5 yards from opposing team's goal.

Indirect Free Kick

- Opponents at least 5 yards away
- Ball in play when kicked and clearly moves
- Can be kicked in any direction
- Kicker may not touch ball second time until it has touched another player



Dropped Ball

To restart play for unusual but neutral reason, such as:

- Injury
- Dog on the field
- Stray ball or non-player on field
- Ball hits referee and gives a team an advantage
- Etc.

Dropped Ball

- Referee drops the ball to one player of the team that last possessed it, at the location the ball was when the referee stopped play.
- All other players at least 5 yards away from ball until ball touches the ground.



Dropped Ball

- Ball in play when it hits ground
- If player kicks ball before it hits ground or if opponents run in too soon, ball is dropped again
- Goal cannot be scored directly from dropped ball. Ball must touch another player first.



Review

Check For Understanding



A player is injured and leaves the field (with the Referee's permission).

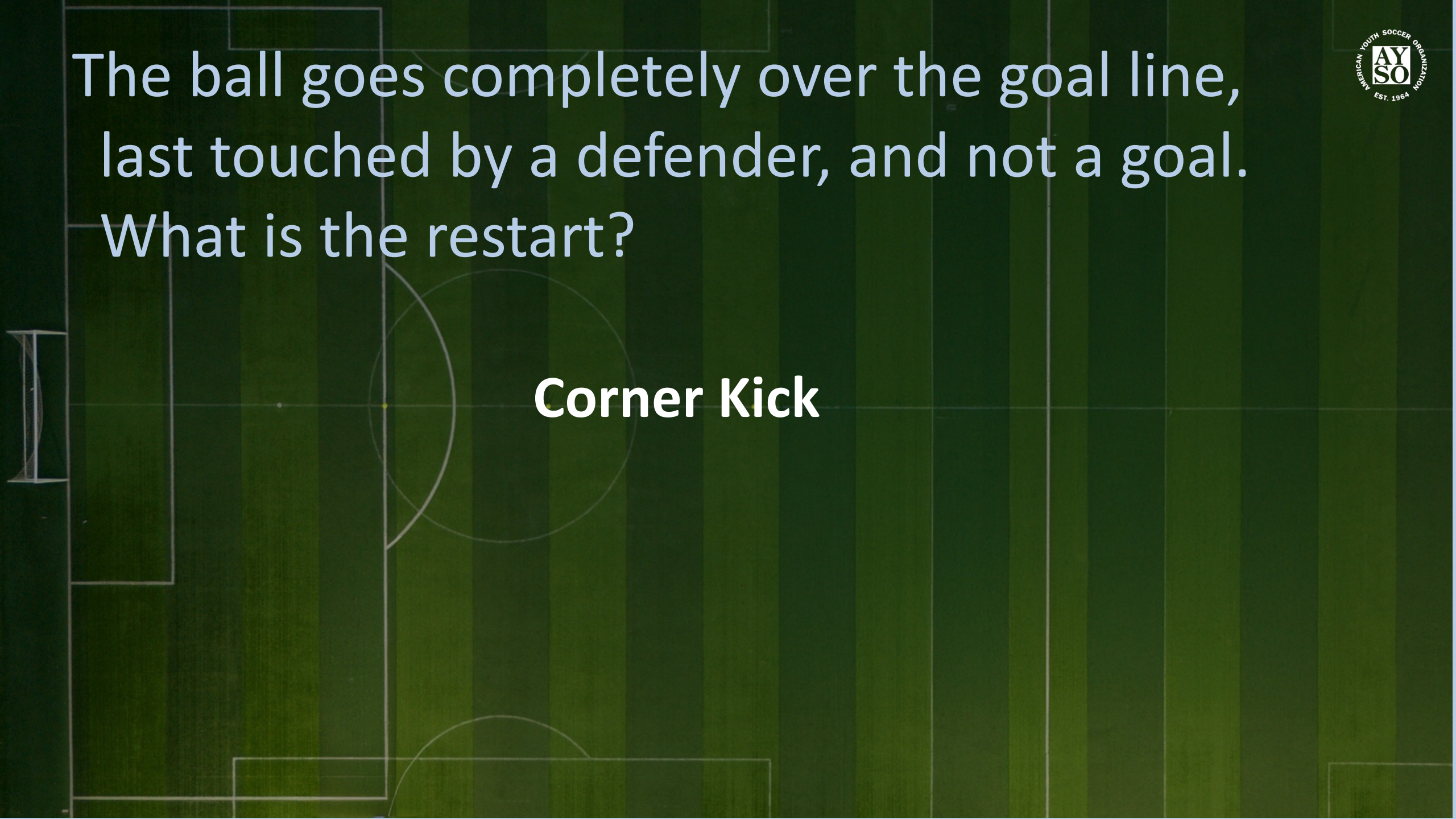
What are the coach's substitution options?

- 1. The team can play short until the player returns to the field (with the Referee's permission); or**
- 2. A substitute can replace the injured player.**

The ball goes completely over the touchline,
last touched by an attacker. What is the
restart?

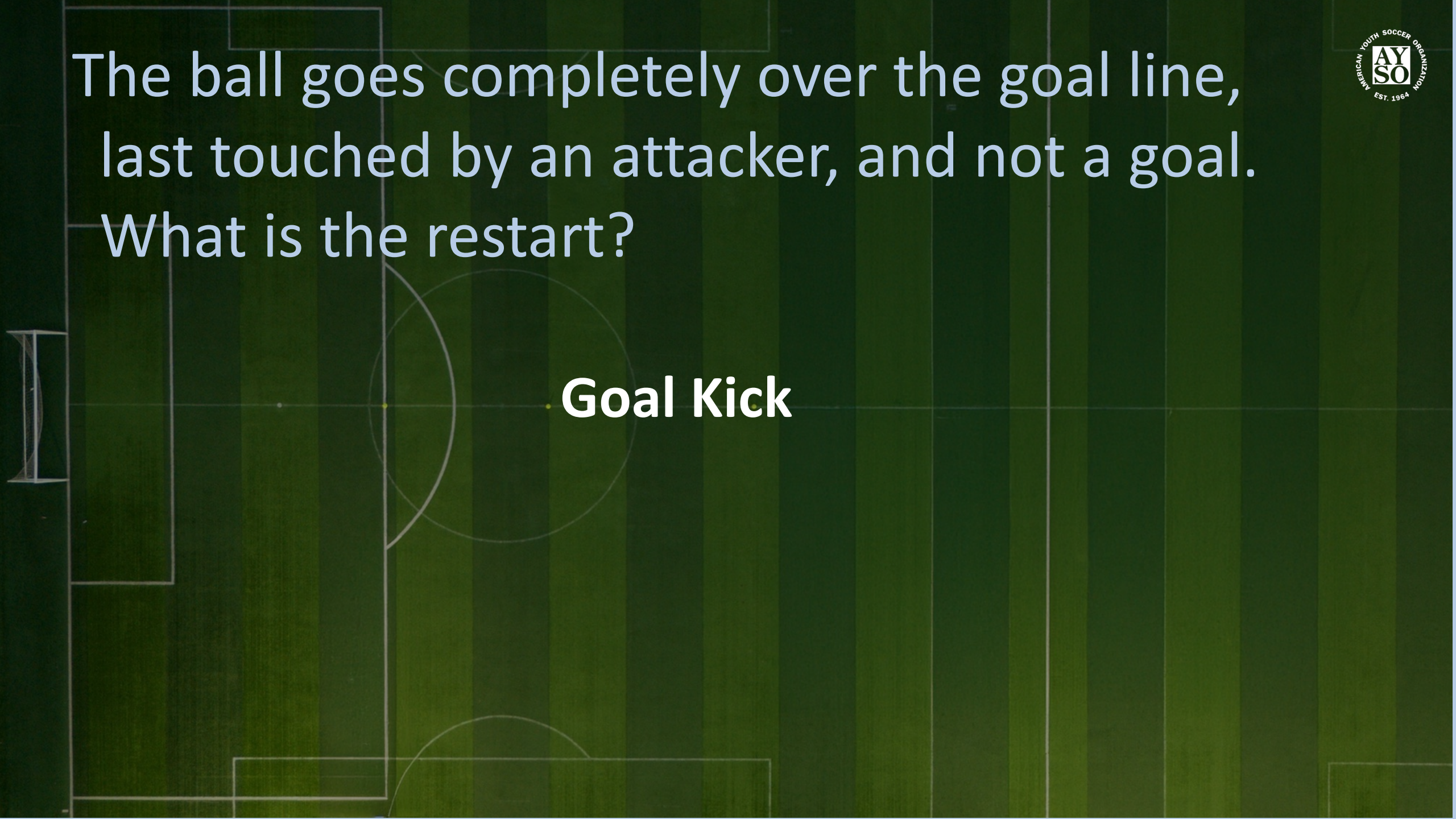
**Pass-in for the defending team (or throw-in for
8U if Region allows).**

The ball goes completely over the goal line,
last touched by a defender, and not a goal.
What is the restart?

A faint, light green diagram of a soccer field is overlaid on the dark green background. It shows the center circle, the goal line, and the goal itself on the left side. A yellow dot is placed on the goal line, indicating the ball's position for a corner kick.

Corner Kick

The ball goes completely over the goal line,
last touched by an attacker, and not a goal.
What is the restart?

A faint, light green diagram of a soccer field is overlaid on the dark green background. It shows the center circle, the goal line, and the goal area. A yellow dot is placed on the center circle, and a white dot is placed on the goal line. The text 'Goal Kick' is written in white next to the yellow dot.

Goal Kick



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Post-Game Duties



Post-Game Duties

- Collect game ball and return to owner
- Supervise team handshakes



Post-Game Duties

- Complete lineup card
- Complete any misconduct or incident report
 - These should be rare at 6U, 7U and 8U

[illegible]



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Referee Communication



Referee Communication

- Whistle, arm signals, and voice
- Inexperienced players will not understand arm signals only or whistle only, so add verbal instruction.
- Explain (briefly) reason for stopping play
- Explain (briefly) how to restart play
- Teach players to retrieve balls and place balls

Referee Signals

Situation	Whistle?	Arm signal, restart, and comments
Kick-off	YES	Point arm horizontally toward goal being attacked by the team taking the kick.
Ball leaves field (not a goal)	NO, if obvious	• Pass-in or throw-in: point arm 45 degrees up towards goal being attacked by the team taking the throw-in. • Goal kick: point arm 45 degrees horizontal or slightly downwards toward goal area of team taking the kick. • Corner kick: point arm 45 degrees up towards corner where kick is to be taken (corner nearest to where ball went out).

Referee Signals

Situation	Whistle?	Arm signal, restart, and comments
Goal scored	NO, if obvious	Point arm horizontally towards center circle. Restart with kick-off.
Foul / technical offense	YES	Point arm horizontally toward goal being attacked by the team taking the free kick. Restart with indirect free kick.
Injury (not associated with a foul), outside interference	YES	No arm signal. Restart with dropped ball.

Referee Signals

Situation	Whistle?	Arm signal, restart, and comments
Substitution break	YES	Stop play for break with whistle. Restart based on reason play stopped, with whistle.
End of half	YES	Whistle (2 tweets for end of 1st half; 3 tweets for end of 2nd half) and point arm horizontally towards center mark.

In AYSO, it's about more than the game!



THANK YOU FOR
VOLUNTEERING!

