

Basic Soccer Position Terms

Backs – Refers to defenders.

Defender – A player who works mainly in the defensive third of the field. They are primarily focused on stopping the opposition's attackers from scoring.

Forward – A player who is responsible for most of a team's scoring. They play in front of the rest of their team (or in the attacking third of the field) where they can take most of the shots.

Fullback – a rear defender.

Goalie – Abbreviation for Goalkeeper.

Goalkeeper – I bet you know this one. The player positioned directly in front of the goal who tries to prevent shots from crossing the goalline; the only player allowed to use their hands and arms, though only within the 18-yard penalty area.

Keeper – Abbreviation for Goalkeeper.

Midfielder – A player generally positioned in the middle third of the field between the forwards and defenders. Their job is to link the defense and the offense through ball control and passing. They play both an attacking role and a defensive role.

Striker – Generally the same as a forward, though it sometimes refers to a forward that is his team's primary scoring threat.

Sweeper – Not always used. In some formations, a single defender that plays closest to their own goal behind the rest of the defenders; a team's last line of defense in front of the goalkeeper.

Advanced Soccer Positions

Attacking Midfielder – The midfielder that plays right behind the forwards; they support the offense by providing passes to forwards to set up goals.

Central Defender – A player who guards the area directly in front of their own goal, often considered the strongest defender.

Central Forward – A team's best-scoring forward who plays towards the center of the field.

Central Midfielder – The midfielder most responsible for organizing play in the midfield area, creating scoring opportunities for the attackers, and often a team's leader.

Defensive Midfielder – The player positioned just in front of their team's defense and often assigned to mark the opposition's best offensive player; tends to play more defense as a midfielder.

Finisher – A forward or striker who has the ability to "put away" or score when opportunities are given to them.

Halfback – Same as a midfielder.

Midfield Anchor – Same as a defensive midfielder.

Midfield General – Same as the central midfielder.

Midfield Maestro – Same as the central midfielder.

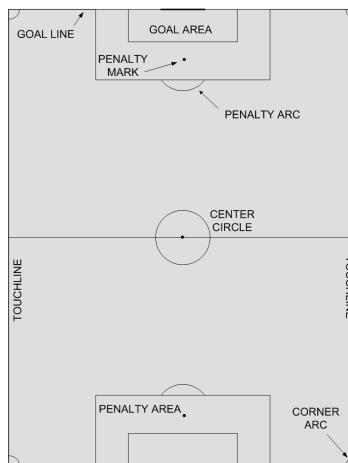
Stopper – The player that defends or guards the best scorer on the attacking team, often the opposition's striker.

Wingers – The outside forwards and midfielders (often the fastest players and best dribblers) who play on the sides of the field. Their primary task is to provide them with accurate crossing passes so they can shoot at the goal.

Basic Soccer Field Terms

First, A Diagram

For those who learn best using visual aids, click on the diagram below to view a larger version. It will open in a separate window so you may need to disable your popup blocker.



Print it out or leave it open in a separate window as a reference.

Terms

Center Circle – a circular marking with a 10-yard radius in the “center” of the field from which kickoffs are taken to start or restart the game. Purpose: Simply a reference line for the referee and defenders. Defenders must be at least 10 yards away from the ball prior to start or restart.

Center Line – See Midfield line.

Center Spot – The “center” of the center circle from which kickoffs are taken to start or restart the game. Not too complicated! 😊

Corner Arc – an arc or quarter-circle with a radius of 1 yard located at each of the 4 corners of the soccer field. Purpose: Also a reference line, the ball must be kicked from inside this arc on a corner kick.

Corner Flag – the flag located at each of the 4 corners of the soccer field, inside the corner area.

End Line – the boundary line extending from corner to corner along its width at each end.

Field – the rectangular area where soccer matches are played.

Goal Area – the rectangular area (20 x 6 yd. on a full-size soccer field) marked within the penalty area (or inside the larger rectangle) and directly in front of goal. Purpose: Marks the area from which all goal kicks must be taken.

Goal Box – commoner’s term for the goal area or sometimes the penalty area.

Goal Line – same as the end line.

Midfield Line – a line in the center of the soccer field that divides the field in half along its width and runs parallel to the goals. Purpose: Used for start and restart as well as for calling offside. A player cannot be offside on their half of the field. Also called the center line.

Penalty area – The larger rectangle (18 x 44 yd. On a full size field) in front of the goal that includes the goal area. Purpose: Marks both where the goalkeeper is allowed to touch the ball with his hands AND the area where harsh fouls committed by the defending team result in penalty kicks.

Penalty Arc – The arc at the top of the penalty area. Purpose: Designates how far back all players must be away from the ball while a penalty kick is being taken.

Penalty Mark (or Spot) – the mark on the soccer field from which penalty kicks are taken.

Pitch – Another word for the field.

Sideline – common word for the touchline.

Touchline – the line that runs along the length of each side of the field. Commonly called the sideline in other sports.

Basic Soccer Action Terms

Center – a pass from either side of the field towards the middle of the field. It is used primarily to get the ball closer to the front of the goal. The words “center” and “cross” are used interchangeably.

Charging – a method of running at and unbalancing the player who has possession, or is attempting to gain possession of the ball; the act of using a "shoulder" against an opponent's shoulder to gain an advantage, allowed only when the ball is playable (i.e. within 3 feet).

Clearing – the act of moving the ball out of the area of one's own goal by throwing (goalkeeper only) or kicking it.

Cross – another word for center.

Fake – a move by a player meant to deceive an opposing player. Used to gain an advantage, it is frequently used when dribbling to get past an opponent.

Feint – another word for a fake.

Foot Trap – the use of the foot, usually the bottom, to control a rolling or low bouncing ball.

Header – When a player passes or shoots the ball with his head.

Save – the act of a goalkeeper in stopping a shot that would have otherwise gone into the goal.

Screening – another word for shielding.

Shielding –used by the person with the ball to protect the ball from a defender; the ball carrier keeps their body between the ball and the defender.

Slide Tackle – a move where a player attempts to win the ball by sliding towards the ball. If the tackling player touches the ball first, he is allowed to make contact with the player controlling the ball. If the tackling player strikes the player before the ball, a foul is assessed. A tackle from behind is always a foul regardless of whether the tackler managed to get to the ball first.

Tackle – the act of taking the ball away from a player by kicking or stopping it with one's feet.

Trap – the use of one's body to slow down and control a moving ball, most often using the chest, thighs or feet.

Advanced Soccer Action Terms

Banana Kick – a kick that curves such that it take the shape of a banana. This is usually attempted on a corner kick to curve the ball from the corner directly into the goal.

Bicycle Kick – when a player kicks the ball in mid-air backwards and over their own head, usually making contact above waist level. Not too frequent at the youth level! 😊

Cut Back – dribbling the ball backwards in the reverse way of the goal in an attempt to keep possession of the ball.

Cut Down the Angle – when the goalie comes out of the goal several feet to make themselves closer and larger to an attacker. The effect is to leave the attacker less open net to shoot at.

First Time Ball – when the ball is received and propelled in a single movement. Also called one touch pass and first touch.

First Touch – another word for first time ball.

Flick – a quick header.

Hospital Ball – a dangerous pass from one teammate to another. Instead of being crisp the pass is too soft, resulting in a pass that becomes a 50/50 ball (up for grabs) instead of one that is easily received.

Instep Drive – a shot taken with the instep of a player's foot; usually the most powerful and accurate of shots.

Instep Pass – a pass made by striking the ball with – yes, you guessed it, the instep.

In Swinger – a ball that is curving in toward the goal, usually made from a corner kick. Same thing as a banana kick.

"Man On" – the call a player makes to a teammate who is closely marked by an opposing player but may not be aware of it.

Mark – to cover an opponent with or without the ball to keep them from passing, receiving or shooting the ball.

Narrowing the Angle – same as cut down the angle.

Offside Trap – a play by the defense to catch the attacking team offside. The rear defenders will quickly pull up past the attackers to put the attackers in an offside position. See the [Soccer Rules Page](#) for more information on the offside rule.

One Touch Pass – another term for a first time ball.

"Pull Up" – can also be “push up”, a phrase used to tell the defense to move up the field in a more attacking position. Sometimes used as the command for an offside trap.

Scissors Kick – another word for bicycle kick.

Shoulder Tackle – a tackle used to get the ball away from an opponent by making shoulder-to-shoulder contact.

Two Touch Pass – a pass in which the ball is received by a player with one touch and then played to a teammate with the next touch.

Basic Soccer Rule Terms

Caution – a disciplinary action in which the referee shows a player the yellow card (for violating a soccer rule, obviously). A second caution in the same match results in the player being shown the red card (ejected from the game).

Corner kick – a direct free kick that is awarded when the defending team puts the ball over the end line. A corner kick is taken by the offensive team from next to the corner flag.

Dangerous Play – an action by a player that the referee considers dangerous to that player or others. Examples are high kicking, playing while lying on the ground, or playing the ball while it is in the possession of the goalkeeper.

Direct Free Kick – a free kick that is awarded at the spot of the infraction for a physical contact foul such as tripping, holding, pushing, tackles from behind, jumping into an opponent, or for hand balls. A direct free kick can score by going directly into the goal. It does not have to be touched by anyone other than the kicker.

Drop Ball – a method of restarting a game where the referee drops the ball between 2 players facing each other. A drop ball restarts the game after play is stopped for no penalty situation (e.g. after an injury) and in other circumstances (more than one soccer rule about this). The ball is dropped where it was last in play or at the nearest point outside the penalty area.

Foul – when the referee judges a violation against an opposing player. The team that suffers the foul is awarded with a direct free kick unless the foul is committed by a defensive player inside his own penalty area, in which case the foul results in a penalty kick.

Goal Kick – a type of restart that is awarded when the attacking team puts the ball over the end line. The ball is kicked from anywhere inside the goal area away from the goal to restart play. After the kick is taken, the ball cannot be touched again by any player until it is outside of the penalty area.

Indirect Free Kick – a free kick that is awarded at the spot of the infraction for other fouls that are judged not to be serious such as obstruction, dangerous play or charging (non-contact fouls), as well as for offside. Indirect kicks must touch another player (either team) before the ball goes into the net in order to score.

Offside – *a difficult soccer rule.*

Not good enough for you? Ok, ok. Here it is: a violation that occurs when an offensive player is closer to the opponent's goal than both the ball and the second-to-last opposing player at the time that the ball is passed to the offensive player by his or her teammate. Players cannot be called offside if they are in their own half of the field or if they receive the ball from a throw in, corner kick, or goal kick. When a player is called offside, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick. See the [Soccer Rule Page](#) for more information on the offside rule.

Obstruction – a foul in which a defensive player, instead of going after the ball, illegally uses their body to prevent an offensive player from playing it.

Penalty kick – A kick taken from 12 yards in front of the goal as a result of a contact foul or hand ball that takes place inside the penalty area.

Red card – a referee shows a player a red card to signal that the player has been banned from the rest of the match. A red card can be shown for a single serious offense or as the result of being shown a second yellow card in the same game. After a player is shown a red card, the player must leave the field of play and cannot be replaced by a substitute, meaning that his or her team must finish the match with one player fewer.

Sending off – an ejection resulting from a player being shown a red card. See also Red card.

Throw-in – a way to restart play when the ball goes out over the sidelines. The team that did not touch the ball last is allowed an overhead throw.

Yellow card – see Caution.

Here's the short and simple soccer rules you need to know as a parent.

1. No Hands, please

I bet you knew that one. Most people who know nothing about soccer still know that you aren't supposed to use your hands unless you're the goalie.

A couple of points to clarify.

First, the rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder.

Second, the proper way to look at this soccer rule is that a player cannot "handle" the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player's hand or arm is not a hand ball. This means that the referee must use his or her own judgment to some extent in determining whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or a purposeful attempt to gain an advantage.

Believe it or not, there is also a situation in which the goalie cannot use his/her hands. This is sometimes called the back-pass rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a pass that came directly from

one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper must use his feet. Infraction of this soccer rule will result in an indirect kick from the point of the infraction.

2. Throw-ins

A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head.

For teaching purposes it is common to allow players under the age of 8 to take more than 1 attempt.

3. Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks

A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across the endline – you know, the end of the field. 😊

If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick.

The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the “goalie box” as it is affectionately called. It can be taken by any player, not just the goalkeeper.

The corner kick is taken from – yes, you guessed it – the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.

You may be confused at times in youth soccer games to see a goal kick retaken. This is because the FIFA soccer rules state that the ball is not back “in play” until it leaves the penalty area, the large box outside of the “goalie box”. No one can touch the ball until it leaves the penalty area, and if the ball is not kicked properly to leave the area, the kick must be retaken.

4. Fouls

The common rule of thumb on fouls is “If it looks like a foul, it probably is.”

Too true. A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent.

So what’s the problem?

Soccer can be a physical, contact sport when two opposing players both want the soccer ball and no parent likes it when little Johnny loses the ball and ends up on the ground!

“**Foul!**” cries the parent. “**Little Johnny was pushed!**”

What you need to know as a parent is that bumping or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is *not a foul* until the hands or elbows come up. This is a bit of a judgment

call and not all referees will call it the same way. Some soccer rules are actually not black-and-white.

Remember though, the referee is ALWAYS right.

5. Direct and Indirect Free Kicks

The simple difference between the two is this: On a direct kick you can score by kicking the ball *directly* into the goal. On an indirect kick you cannot score. An indirect kick must be touched by another player before it can go into the goal – that is the kicker and a second person.

As a parent on the sideline, you can tell whether the kick is direct or indirect by looking at the referee. For an indirect kick, the referee will hold one arm straight up in the air until the second person touches the ball. No arm up, it's a direct kick.

There are many soccer rules around what causes a direct or indirect kick.

In general, a direct kick comes from a contact foul or hand ball. Everything else is indirect.

6. Penalty Kick

A penalty kick results from a contact foul or hand ball by the defending team within the penalty area – the large box on either end of the field. So it's a type of direct kick also.

The ball is placed on the penalty spot, 12 yards in front of the center of the goal.

All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked.

If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the goal or the keeper and stays on the field, the ball is “live” and anyone can play it.

7. Two-touch Rule

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will see this called many times in youth soccer. It applies everywhere. You will see it frequently on kick-offs or direct and indirect kicks. If a kid barely hits the ball and decides to take another swipe at it, that is a two-touch.

This also applies to throw-ins. A kid cannot throw the ball in and then kick it. Nope. No way. No can do.

8. Yellow and Red Cards

This is the way punishment is given in soccer. The FIFA soccer rules give the guidelines for when to give a yellow card to a player and when to give a red card. I'm not going to get into the specifics here.

If a player is given two yellow cards in the same game, that is equal to a red card. A red card can be given at any time without the player first receiving a yellow card. When a player gets a red card, they must leave the game and their team must play short. An ejected player cannot be replaced.

9. Offside

I decided to leave the best for last.

This is without a doubt the least understood rule by parents and coaches alike.

Check your local league soccer rules first. There's a good chance that this rule won't be called for the U8 or younger teams. You may be off the hook for now. However, if you are a U8 or U6 coach you still need to know this rule so you can begin teaching your players not to be offside.

The first thing to know is that you cannot be offside on a corner kick, goal kick, or throw-in. Don't ask me why. Just accept it and go on. The explanation is too long.

Also, it is not an offense for a player to be in an offside position. The player must be involved in active play as determined by the referee to be called offside.

As quoted from the FIFA soccer rules:

A player is in an offside position if: *he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent.*

Clear yet? I didn't think so.

Try this. An offensive or attacking player can't be ahead of the ball and involved in the play unless there is a defender between him and the goalkeeper. Or, you can't hang out at the other team's goal waiting for the ball.

A few other but's. You can't be offside if you are standing on your half of the field. Also, the offside rule applies when the ball is kicked, not when the player receives the ball.

To be honest with you, this can be a hard rule to understand. Don't get too hung up on it.