

Understanding Soccer Referee Signals

Center Referee



1 Advantage - pointing forward after foul play. Both arms parallel in front, pointing towards the goal of the team that has the advantage. The referee does not blow the whistle for this signal.^[1]

- An advantage is played when one team has committed a minor foul, but the other team is perceived to have an advantage. Therefore, instead of calling foul, the referee lets the play continue and shows the advantage signal.
- For example, if a defender fouls the attacker, but the attacker still has a chance for a shot at goal, the referee shows the advantage signal.
- With more severe fouls, the referee stops the play immediately and gives a free-kick to the team that had the foul committed on them.



2 Direct free kick - whistle blown and pointing forward. Whistle held and blown (short & sharp) with one hand, while other hand points in the attacking direction of the team that is receiving the free kick. Play stops when whistle blown.

- For example, the referee may award a direct free kick to a team if a player on the other team, who is not the goalkeeper, touches the ball with their hands.
- This is the most common form of signal you see during games. Referees award free kicks for minor/mid-level fouls, where the ref judges that receiving team does not have an advantage.



3 Indirect free kick – whistle blown and pointing up. Whistle held and blown (short & sharp) with one hand, while free hand, points directly towards the sky. The referee explains who is receiving the free kick and why while hand stays in the air.

- Indirect free kicks are different from free kicks in that you are not allowed to shoot at the goal. If you were to score from an indirect free kick, and the ball had not touched someone else on the field, the goal would not count.
- Indirect free kicks are much less common than direct free kicks. However, one example of how one may be awarded is if a team passes the ball back to their goalkeeper, and the goalkeeper touches it with their hands.



4 Penalty kick – whistle blown and pointing at penalty

spot. Whistle blown (long & firm) with one hand, while pointing directly at the penalty spot of the team that has been awarded the penalty.

- Penalty kicks are relatively rare in soccer. The ref awards them to the attacking team when a foul is committed in the goal box.
- In a penalty kick situation, the attacking team gets a shot at the goal 1 on 1 with the goalkeeper, from the penalty spot.
- An example of a penalty offence would be if someone touched the ball with their hands in the soccer net.



5 Yellow card - medium level offences. First yellow card equals a warning. Second yellow card equals a red card & ejection from the field.

- The referee takes the card out of their pocket, points it at the player, and then points it in the air. After this, they write the details of the offence in their notebook.
- An example of a yellow card offence is a harsh tackle where the tackler didn't make any contact with the ball.



6 Red card - severe offences. Red card given for severe offences or for multiple yellow cards. If the ref gives the player a red card for receiving 2 yellow cards, the ref will point the yellow card at them first, followed by the red card.

- The referee will point the red card at them and then hold it straight up in the air, just like with a yellow card.
- An example of an offence for a red card might be a player punching another player. A player that receives a red card is ejected from the field and no further game play.

Sideline Referees



- 1 Corner kick** - The sideline referee runs down to the corner flag on their side of the field and points down at the corner spot. No whistle.
- An example of when you see this is when an attacker takes a shot at goal and a defender deflects the ball out of bounds behind the goal.
 - The sideline referee runs up and down their half of the field. Once play passes out of their half, they stand at the halfway line until play comes back into their half.



- 2 Throw-in** - When the ball crosses out-of-bounds, the sideline referee runs to that spot and points their flag in the attacking direction of the of the team who has the throw-in. No whistle.
- If the ball goes out and it is not in a sideline referee's half of the field, they only show which direction the throw is in if it is an obvious call. If not an obvious call, the center referee makes the decision of the direction.
 - A ball is 'out' once the entire ball has crossed the line marking the field of play. If the ball is only half out, play continues.



- 3 Offside** - Shown by sideline referee standing still in line with the offside player and pointing their flag directly out onto the field. Their arm will be perpendicular to their body. No whistle
- The offside rule can be confusing to understand. An offside is called when a team is attacking and they pass the ball to a player on their team who is in front of the last player of the defending team when the pass was made, an offside is called.
- For example, the sideline ref puts up their flag if an attacking player passed the ball to a teammate who, when the player passing the ball makes contact with it, is closer to the goal than all of the defenders on the other team.
 - The rule is in place to make sure that players cannot simply camp out in their opponents' half of the field and receive long passes from their teammates.



- 4 Substitution** - Sideline referees run to halfway and makes a rectangle above their head with their arms and the flag. They hold this signal for 5-10 seconds, so people get a chance to see it.
- There might be someone holding a board with the number off the player coming off, in red, and the number of the player going on, in green.
 - Both of the sideline referees usually make this signal.