



LAWS OF THE GAME CHANGES 2026

CLARIFICATIONS AND
ASSOCIATED LAW CHANGES



IFAB LOTG CHANGES

- The IFAB website is the official source for all LOTG updates.
- This includes clear explanations of the changes including videos of real events.
- These resources are designed specifically to support Referees in understanding how the laws should be applied in practice.
- Please make some time to go through these changes on their web site.

<https://www.theifab.com/law-changes/latest/>



LAW 3 – THE PLAYERS

TEAM CAPTAINS (LAW 3.10)

Captains only may approach referees in specific moments.
The team captain has no special status or privileges but has a degree of responsibility for the behaviour of the team.



LAW 5 – THE REFEREE

REFEREE SIGNALS (LAW 5.6)

Countdown for the last five seconds of the eight-second restriction on goalkeepers controlling the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s).



LAW 8 – THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY

DROPPED BALL (LAW 8.2)

If ball was inside penalty area when play stopped – Drop ball for defending goalkeeper.
If ball was outside of penalty area when play stopped – Drop ball for team who had/should have had possession.



LAW 9 – BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

THE BALL IN AN OUT OF PLAY (LAW 9.2)

Indirect free kick on the line, no disciplinary sanction for a player or team official who is off the field of play and touches the ball as it is leaving the field of play and there is no intention to interfere unfairly



LAW 11 - OFFSIDE

OFFSIDED OFFENCE (LAW 12.2)

Clarification with goalkeeper throwing the ball

When GK throws the ball, offside judged at **last point of contact**



LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

GOALKEEPER TIME-WASTING (LAW 12.2)

GK now has **8 seconds** to release the ball from hands

Referee counts down last 5 seconds visually. If exceeded:

1st offence → Corner kick awarded

2nd offence → Corner kick and warning

3rd offence → Corner kick and caution



INDIVIDUAL LAW CHANGES

- **Law 3. The Players**

- To prevent players mobbing or surrounding the referee in major situations and following key incidents or decisions:
 - only one player from each team – usually the captain – is allowed to approach the referee and, when doing so, they must always interact in a respectful manner
 - the referee may instruct/encourage players (verbally or with gestures) not to approach them
 - the team captains are responsible for helping to direct their team-mates away from the referee
 - players who approach/surround the referee when they are not permitted to do so may be cautioned (yellow card)

- **Law 5. The Referee**

- Raised arm signal to be used by referees to count down the last five seconds of the eight-second restriction on goalkeepers controlling the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s).



INDIVIDUAL LAW CHANGES

- **Law 8. The Start and Restart of Play – Dropped ball**
 - If, when play was stopped, the ball was:
 - inside the penalty area – the ball is dropped for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area
 - outside the penalty area – the ball is dropped for a player of the team that has or would have gained possession if this is clear to the referee; otherwise, it is dropped for a player of the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped.
- **Law 9. The Ball in and out of Play**
 - Indirect free kick and no disciplinary sanction when a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or player who is temporarily off the field of play touches the ball as it is leaving the field of play and there is no intention to interfere unfairly.



INDIVIDUAL LAW CHANGES

- **Law 11. Offside**
 - When the goalkeeper throws the ball, the last point of contact should be used for the purpose of determining an offside position.
- **Law 12. Fouls and Misconduct**
 - If a goalkeeper has control of the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than eight seconds, the referee will now award a corner kick on the side of the field closest to the goalkeeper's position when penalised
 - The count should begin when there are no opponents impeding the goalkeeper
 - 1st offense – corner kick
 - 2nd offense – warning & corner kick
 - 3rd offense – yellow card & corner kick

