Key tips and techniques to improve your Game

Learn how to master the key skills and techniques of the world's most popular sport with this essential guide to soccer. Explains the laws, tactics, and science behind the world's most popular game. Features detailed step-by-step illustrations to help perfect your skills. Describes the key tricks and techniques, from stops and turns to stepovers and set plays. Profiles the individual skills used by legendary players, such as Cristiano Ronaldo and David Beckham. Includes the concepts, formations, and strategies behind effective teamwork. Includes content previously published in *The Soccer Book*.

Printed in China

$14.95 USA

$16.95 Canada

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ESSENTIAL SOCCER SKILLS

KEY TIPS AND TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME

Includes content previously published in *The Soccer Book*
Introduction

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world. From the Andes to Greenland, people just can’t seem to resist kicking a leather ball around or watching others doing the same. The figures are staggering—approximately 250 million people play the game regularly. In fact, if soccer players made up a nation, it would be the fourth most populous on the planet.

"If all the soccer players in the world were to form a nation, it would be the fourth most populous on the planet."

You could almost say that soccer is a universal language. If you found yourself in a strange country with no knowledge of the local tongue, you would still be able to strike up a conversation by using a few hand gestures accompanied by the names of some prominent players. Place one hand at chest level while saying “Pelé,” then raise it with the word “Maradona” and you’ll quickly start making friends.

An interesting observation often made about soccer is that its language is couched in military terms (such as campaigns, tactics, and captains). Some theories claim that soccer is a surrogate for hunting—on which, of course, our ancestors depended for their survival. According to this view, a goal scored is equivalent to a kill, which would certainly explain the sense of importance surrounding the game. Another possibility is that soccer is a kind of ritualized warfare. It may be no accident that its popularity has coincided with an era in which young men have been less regularly engaged in war than in the past. Both these theories have their merits but perhaps another, simpler explanation needs to be added.
Our history can be seen as the story of an ever-increasing split between our physical selves and our minds. Soccer, however, works the other way around. By uniting the brain with the parts of the body at the opposite extremity (the feet), it temporarily heals the split. When we play the game or identify with others who are doing so, we become whole again. And, of course, it is not just men who feel this way. The women’s game is extremely popular as well—for every reference to a “he” in this book, a “she” can and should just as easily be substituted.

*Essential Soccer Skills* celebrates the sport by presenting its varied and complex skills in a clear and simple way. It describes the relative merits of zonal and man-to-man marking, for example, and explains how to perform the perfect header. The book goes on to unravel the complexities of the offside rule and even shows you how to spin and turn like Zinédine Zidane or “bend” the ball like David Beckham. *Essential Soccer Skills* will help you appreciate what makes soccer such a great game to watch—and play.

“Some people believe football (soccer) is a matter of life and death,” the great Liverpool manager Bill Shankly once said. “I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that.” No one has better captured the irrational depth of passion aroused by twenty-two men chasing a ball.
The Basics
The rules

The Laws of the Game were devised by the FA in 1863. As a testament to the game’s simplicity, there are only 17 laws in place today. The offside rules (see pp.18–19) have proved to be the most complex to create and administer, having been overhauled three times in the rulebook’s history.

Enforcing the rules
The Laws of the Game are enforced by the referee (see pp.22–23), who has the final say in any match disputes. Since 1992, FIFA has stipulated that all referees in international matches must speak English. The referee may be helped by two assistant referees and a fourth official (see pp.24–27). The fourth official is increasingly used in international matches and the leading leagues, primarily to assist the referee in administrative duties.

"THE OFFSIDE RULE HAS BEEN OVERHAULED THREE TIMES IN THE RULEBOOK’S HISTORY."

ROBERTO TROTTA
Former Argentinian defender Roberto Trotta holds the dubious honor of receiving the most red cards. He was sent off a record-breaking 17 times during his career.
Laws of the Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. FIELD OF PLAY</th>
<th>2. THE BALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The field (see pp.38–39) must be a rectangle, marked with touchlines,</td>
<td>The ball (see pp.34–35) must be made of approved materials. At the start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goal lines and areas, a halfway line, a center circle, penalty areas, spots,</td>
<td>of the game, it must have a diameter of 27–28in (68.5–71cm), weigh between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and arcs, corner arcs, and flag posts. It must be between 100–131yd (90–120m)</td>
<td>141/2–16oz (410–450g), and have an internal pressure of between 0.6 and 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long and between 49–98yd (45–90m) wide. For international soccer, the limits</td>
<td>atmospheres at sea level. It can only be changed by the referee. If it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are 109–120yd (100–110m) and 70–82yd (64–75m), respectively.</td>
<td>bursts during a game, play is stopped and restarted with a new drop ball.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. NUMBER OF PLAYERS</th>
<th>4. PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A match consists of two teams of not more than 11 players, each including a</td>
<td>Compulsory equipment for players are a shirt, shorts, socks, shin pads,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goalkeeper. An outfield player may swap with the goalkeeper during a stoppage</td>
<td>and soccer shoes or cleats (see pp.28–31). Goalkeepers must wear a uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of play. Teams must have at least seven players to begin or continue a match.</td>
<td>that distinguishes them from their own team, their opponents, and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In official competitions, a maximum of three player substitutions may be made by</td>
<td>officials. Headgear is allowed if it does not present a threat to other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each team.</td>
<td>players. Most forms of jewelry are not permitted.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. THE REFEREE</th>
<th>6. ASSISTANT REFEREES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The referee (see pp.22–23) is the final arbiter and interpreter of the rules.</td>
<td>The assistant referees (see p.24–25), formerly called linesmen, support the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He decides whether a game can go ahead or not, and may stop play if a player</td>
<td>referee, primarily by signaling for corner kicks, throw-ins, and offside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requires medical treatment. He cautions players (yellow card), sends them off</td>
<td>infringements. They must also bring the referee’s attention to any other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(red card), and is responsible for timekeeping, record-keeping, and ensuring</td>
<td>fouls or infringements that the referee may not have seen. However, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that all match equipment and uniforms are correct.</td>
<td>referee’s word is always final.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE BASICS

7. DURATION OF MATCH
There are two equal halves of 45 minutes of play. Additional time may also be added—at the discretion of the referee—in case of injuries, substitutions, and time-wasting. Time can also be added to allow a penalty to be taken at the end of normal time. Rules covering extra time are made by the national soccer associations and confederations.

8. START/RESTART OF PLAY
A coin is tossed at the start of play; the winners choose ends for the first half and the losers kick off. The other team kicks off in the second half. The kick-off is taken from the center spot and the ball must move into the oppositions’ half. All players must be in their own half, and the opposition must be at least 10yd (9.15m) away from the ball. The ball must be touched by a second player before the first player can touch it again.

9. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY
The ball is in play when it is inside the field of play and the referee has still not stopped play. The ball is out of play when it has completely crossed the sidelines or the goal lines, whether in the air or on the ground. If the ball rebounds off a goalpost, crossbar, corner flagpost, or the referee or one of the assistant referees, and remains in the field of play, it is still in play.

10. METHOD OF SCORING
A goal is scored when the ball has completely crossed the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided that no other infringements have taken place. The team with the most goals wins. If both teams score the same number of goals, or if no goals are scored at all, the match is declared as a draw.

11. OFFSIDE
A player is offside (see pp.18–19), at the moment a ball is passed forward, when he is: in the opponents’ half of the field; is closer to the opponents’ goal line than the ball; and there are fewer than two defenders (including the goalkeeper) closer to the goal line than the attacking player. When a player is called offside, the opposition is awarded a free-kick.

12. FOULS AND MISCONDUCT
A foul (see pp.20–21) has been committed if a player: trips, kicks, pushes, or charges another player recklessly; strikes, attempts to strike, or spits at an opponent; makes a tackle but connects with the player before the ball; deliberately handles the ball (goalkeepers in their area excepted); or obstructs an opponent or prevents them from releasing the ball.
13. FREE-KICKS

Free-kicks (see pp.14–17, 110–13) restart play after a foul or infringement and are usually taken from the place from which the offense was committed. Free-kicks can be “direct,” in which the taker may score directly, or “indirect,” in which the taker and a second player from the same team must touch the ball before a goal can be scored.

14. PENALTY-KICK

A penalty-kick (see pp.15, 114–17) is awarded for a foul committed by a defending player in his or her own penalty area. The kick is taken from the penalty spot and all other players—except for the goalkeeper and taker—must be at least 10yd (9.15m) from the spot. The taker may touch the ball if it rebounds from the goalkeeper, but not if it rebounds from the post or crossbar.

15. THE THROW-IN

A throw-in (see pp.15, 106–09) is awarded when the ball has crossed the sideline and an opposition player was the last to touch it. The throw is taken from the point from which the ball crossed the line. The taker must have both his feet on the ground, use two hands, throw the ball from behind and over his head, and be facing the field of play.

16. GOAL-KICK

A goal-kick (see pp.118–25) is awarded to the defending team when the ball crosses its goal line, a goal has not been scored, and the last player to touch it was from the opposition. Any player may take the goal-kick, placing the ball anywhere in the goal area. The kick must send the ball out of the penalty area or be retaken. The taker may not touch the ball again until it has been touched by a second player.

17. CORNER-KICK

A corner (see pp.15, 106–09) is awarded to the attacking team when the opposition is last to touch the ball and the ball crosses the goal line without a goal being scored. A corner is also awarded if the ball enters the goal from a throw-in or indirect free-kick. The attacking team restarts play by placing the ball in the corner arc nearest to where it crossed the goal line.

SEEING RED

Law 5 says that the referee’s decision is always final.
A set piece is a predetermined, fixed move to restart play when the referee is forced to halt the game temporarily. There are three occasions when a game of soccer is stopped: following an infringement, such as a foul or an offside; when the ball goes out of play; and following a player injury or other interruption, such as a burst ball.

Types of set piece
There are six different types of set piece: goal-kicks, free-kicks, throw-ins, penalty-kicks, corner-kicks, and drop-balls. Free-kicks can be either "direct" or "indirect" (see p.110). In either situation, every member of the opposing team must be at least 10yd (9.15m) from the ball at the moment the kick is taken.

GOAL-KICK
A goal-kick is awarded to a defending team when the ball completely crosses the goal line—either on the ground or in the air—having been kicked by an opposing player without a goal being scored.

FREE-KICK
Direct free-kicks are awarded for serious offenses, such as kicking, tripping, or pushing, while indirect free-kicks are awarded for less serious offenses, such as obstruction or offside (see p.16).
**THROW-IN**
A throw-in is awarded against the team that last touches the ball before it crosses the sideline. It is made with both feet on or behind the sideline, and both hands moving from behind the taker’s head.

**PENALTY-KICK**
A penalty is awarded for any offense committed inside the penalty area that would otherwise be punished by a direct free-kick if it had taken place outside the penalty area.

There can be huge pressure on the taker of a penalty-kick, especially during a penalty shootout (see p.114)

**CORNER-KICK**
A corner-kick is awarded when the whole ball crosses the goal line (either on ground or in air) having last been touched by a member of the defending team, including the goalkeeper.

Many goals are scored from corners, often as a result of headers
16

THE BASICS | USING SET PIECES

Set-piece etiquette

If a player is injured, the team in possession is expected to kick the ball into touch. The other side should then return it from the resulting set piece. During an English FA Cup tie in 1999, Sheffield United's goalkeeper kicked the ball out of play so that an injured teammate could receive treatment. But instead of returning the ball, Arsenal midfielder Ray Parlour initiated a move that led to the winning goal. The match was eventually replayed.

DROP-BALL

A drop-ball is played when a game needs to be started again following an incident that is not covered in the rules, such as a serious player injury. When such a case occurs, the ball is not awarded to either team. Instead, a player from one team stands opposite a player from the other team and the referee drops the ball between them.

OFFENSES: DIRECT FREE-KICKS

Direct free-kicks are usually awarded for relatively serious offenses (see pp. 20–21). The most common are:

KICKING AND TRIPPING
It is an offense for a player to kick or trip—or attempt to kick or trip—an opponent.

JUMPING OR CHARGING
It is an offense for a player to jump or charge at an opponent.

STRIKING AND PUSHING
It is an offense for a player to strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent.

MAKING CONTACT
It is an offense for a player to touch an opponent before touching the ball when making a tackle.

HANDLING THE BALL
It is an offense for a player to deliberately handle the ball (except for the goalkeeper in his area).

OFFENSES: INDIRECT FREE-KICKS

Indirect free-kicks are usually awarded for less serious offenses than direct free-kicks. The most common are:

OBSTRUCTION
It is an offense for a player to deliberately impede the progress of an opponent.

DANGEROUS PLAY
It is an offense to make an attempt to kick the ball when an opponent is attempting to head it, for example.

IMPEDED THE GOALKEEPER
It is an offense to prevent the goalkeeper from releasing the ball.

TOUCHING THE BALL TWICE
It is an offense to touch the ball twice at a set piece without an intervening touch from another player.

OFFSIDE
If a player is offside (see pp. 18–19), an indirect free-kick is given to the opposition.

“A DROP-BALL IS PLAYED WHEN THE GAME NEEDS TO BE RESTARTED AND THE BALL IS NOT AWARDED TO EITHER TEAM.”

A DROP-BALL IS PLAYED WHEN THE GAME NEEDS TO BE RESTARTED AND THE BALL IS NOT AWARDED TO EITHER TEAM.
High stakes

Since many goals are scored from set pieces, a lot of time is spent practicing how to attack (and defend) from set pieces. A defending team, for example, will adopt positions and patterns of movement, such as the wall where the defending players stand in a line, to stop an easy goal.

Legendary free-kick

In 1997, Roberto Carlos (see below) scored from an incredible direct free-kick. He hit the ball so far to the right of the French wall that a ballboy between the corner flag and the goalpost ducked. Miraculously, the ball swerved in and landed in the goal. Carlos’ “banana shot” has entered soccer folklore.

With a shot that seemed to defy the laws of physics, Carlos swerved the ball around the wall.


trajectory of ball

ROBERTO CARLOS

Brazilian wingback Roberto Carlos is known for his trademark free-kicks. His seemingly impossible “banana shot” is legendary. He has played for the Brazil national team in three World Cup tournaments, helping them reach the final in 1998 and to win in 2002.
The offside rule

Offside is the most contentious and frequently misunderstood rule in soccer, as decisions often rest on an official’s individual interpretation of the law. It is also the most frequently revised rule, as minor changes to the regulations can have dramatic effects on the character of matches.

What is the rule?
A player is ruled offside when the ball is passed forward by his teammates if: he’s in the opponent’s half of the field; he’s closer to the opponent’s goal line than the ball; there are less than two defenders closer to the goal line than himself. Only the head, body, and legs are considered. The player is onside if he’s level with the second defender from the goal line or if he receives the ball from a throw-in, corner, or goal-kick.

ONSOIDE
Player A is not offside in this case. This is because when Player B passed the ball, there were two defenders between Player A and the goal line.

OFFSIDE
In this situation, Player A is offside because there is only one defender—the goalkeeper (1)—between him and the goal line when Player B passes the ball. An indirect free-kick would be awarded for this offense.

GOAL LINE

KEY
- Attacking team
- Defending team
- Goalkeeper
- Pass

Player A is in an onside position

Player B passes the ball to Player A, who is offside

Both the goalkeeper (1) and another defender (2) are between Player A and the goal line

Player A is in an offside position
Offside or not?

The offside rule has many nuances that often make rulings very subjective. There are, for example, many situations in which a player is in an offside position but is not deemed to be violating the offside rule. The following scenarios illustrate some of the peculiarities of the rule.

**SCENARIO ONE**

**ONSIDE**
Player A is in an offside position when he receives the ball but was onside when it was played forward by his teammate. Hence, he is onside.

**SCENARIO TWO**

**OFFSIDE**
Player A, who is receiving the ball, was in an offside position when the ball was played forward by Player B. He is therefore offside.

**SCENARIO THREE**

**ONSIDE**
Player C on the left wing is in an offside position. However, as he is not interfering with play between Players A and B, he is deemed to be onside.

**SCENARIO FOUR**

**OFFSIDE**
Player A receives the ball in an onside position but was offside at the moment it was passed forward by Player B. So, Player A is offside.

**SCENARIO FIVE**

**ONSIDE**
Although Player A receives the ball in an offside position, he is actually onside because he was behind the ball at the moment that it was played.
Fouls and infringements

Since the FA’s Laws of the Game (see pp.10–13) were first drawn up in 1863, many offenses have been written into the rulebook as fouls. Referees, equipped with red and yellow cards, have been employed to enforce them.

Crime and punishment
A foul is committed by a player when he has contravened Law 12 of the Laws of the Game. This includes kicking, tripping, or striking an opponent, connecting with a player before connecting with the ball when tackling, and deliberately handling the ball. Red and yellow cards are used to punish serious fouls, while free-kicks are awarded for lesser fouls.

Direct and indirect free-kicks
A direct free-kick is awarded to the opposing team when a player commits a dangerous or “penal” foul, such as charging at an opponent with excessive force or performing a high tackle. A goal may be scored directly from this type of free-kick (see pp.14–17). The opposing team is awarded an indirect free-kick when a player commits a foul other than a dangerous or penal foul, or infringes technical requirements. A goal cannot be scored directly from this type of free-kick (a second player must first touch the ball). See below and opposite for some typical fouls.

In addition to awarding free-kicks, the referee can penalize a player by issuing him with either a yellow or red card.

Obstruction
If a player is positioned between the ball and an opponent and makes no attempt to play the ball, it is known as obstruction.

High Tackle
Whether attempting to play the ball or not, tackles made with “high feet” have become less acceptable in soccer.
HOLDING
Pulling on a player's shirt to slow him down in an attempt to gain possession of the ball contravenes the Laws of the Game.

TRIPPING
Tripping has long been an offense, but the referee must be sharp-eyed to see if there really has been contact between the players.

SLIDING TACKLE
A sliding tackle, in which the attacking player fails to gain possession of the ball, is considered to be a serious foul.

The card system
In addition to awarding free-kicks, the referee can penalize an individual player by issuing him with either a yellow or red card. A yellow card (or caution) is issued for serious offenses or dissent. A red card is issued for very serious or violent offenses and results in the player being sent off immediately. If a player receives two yellow cards in the same game, he will also be sent off.

YELLOW CARD OFFENSES
- Dissent by word or action
- Persistent infringement of the rules
- Delaying the restart of play, and deliberate time-wasting
- Making a poorly timed and dangerous tackle
- Entering or leaving the field without the referee’s permission
- Unsportmanlike behavior

RED CARD OFFENSES
- Serious foul play
- Violent conduct, or using foul language
- Spitting at an opponent or other person
- Denying the opposing team a goal or potential chance at goal by deliberately handling the ball (except the goalkeeper inside his own penalty area)
- Receiving two cautions in one match
The officials

**In professional matches**, the game is controlled by four officials: the referee (see below and opposite), two assistant referees (see pp.24–25), and the fourth official (see p.26). The referee has full authority and, aided by the other officials, is tasked with enforcing the 17 Laws of the Game (see pp.10–13).

**The referee’s hand signals**

Referees use various hand signals to indicate decisions to players. They also blow a whistle to stop play before making the signal. A short, quick whistle indicates a less serious offense, while more serious fouls elicit harder blasts.

**YELLOW CARD**
A yellow card is held up, above the head, to the player being cautioned.

**RED CARD**
A red card is held up, above the head, to the player being sent off.

**DIRECT FREE-KICK**
The referee blows the whistle and points in the direction of the kick.

**INDIRECT FREE-KICK**
A hand is held up until the taker and a teammate have touched the ball.

**ADVANTAGE**
The referee extends both arms to indicate that play can continue.

**PENALTY-KICK**
The referee points to the appropriate penalty mark.

**GOAL-KICK**
The referee points toward the appropriate part of the goal area.

**CORNER-KICK**
The referee points toward the appropriate corner arc.
Refereeing systems

Early matches were played without the referee on the field, but from the late 1890s it became clear that a coordinated and mobile approach to refereeing was needed. Several systems of patrolling the field have since been developed.

**LINEAR SYSTEM**
The referee patrols one side of the field, while one or two assistants cover the opposite sideline. However, the referee may obstruct wing play.

**DIAGONAL SYSTEM**
The referee patrols a diagonal area between two opposing corner flags, while the assistant referees stand on opposite sides.

**ZIGZAG-PATH SYSTEM**
If the referee officiates alone, he may move in a steady zigzag path in a line between the two penalty arcs, changing positions for corners and penalty kicks.

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**A SHORT, QUICK WHISTLE**
**USUALLY INDICATES A LESS SERIOUS OFFENSE, WHILE MORE SERIOUS FOULS ELICIT HARDER BLASTS.**

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**REFEREE’S DUTIES**
The match is controlled by the referee, who enforces the rules for the match to which he has been appointed. His main duties are:

**ENFORCE THE RULES**
The referee’s main task is to enforce the rules set out in the Laws of the Game.

**CONTROL THE MATCH**
He must control the match with the assistant referees and, for official matches, the fourth official.

**CHECK EQUIPMENT**
He must ensure that the ball and the players’ equipment meet the requirements as stated in the Laws of the Game.

**TIMEKEEP AND MAINTAIN RECORDS**
The referee must act as the timekeeper for the match, and keep a record of any substitutions and offenses.

**STOP PLAY WHEN NECESSARY**
It is the duty of the referee to stop, suspend, or abandon the match in case there are any infringements of the Laws of the Game, or because of any other outside interference.

**ENSURE PLAYER SAFETY**
He must stop the match if a player is seriously injured, and ensure that he is removed from the field of play.
Assistant referee

The assistant referee helps the referee to officiate a match. In professional games, two assistants patrol each sideline. They each take responsibility for one half of the field, diagonally opposing each other (see “Refereeing systems,” p.23). They officiate in situations in which the referee is not in a position to make the best decision. Although crucial, their role is purely advisory.

The role of assistants

The more senior of the two assistants usually oversees the side of the field that contains the technical areas, so that he can help supervise substitutions. Typical duties for assistants include signaling for offside and determining which team should be awarded a throw-in.

Assistant referee’s duties

The assistant referee assists with refereeing decisions. His or her duties include:

- **Signaling for out of play**
  The assistant referee signals when the ball leaves the field of play.

- **Signaling for restarts**
  The assistant indicates which side is entitled to a goal-kick, corner-kick, or throw-in.

- **Signaling for offside**
  The assistant referee signals when a player is in an offside position.

- **Signaling for substitutions**
  He or she signals when a substitution has been requested.

- **Signaling for misconduct**
  The assistant signals when misconduct occurs out of the referee’s field of vision.

- **Monitoring the goalkeeper**
  He or she monitors the goalkeeper during penalty-kicks, signaling if he moves off his line before the kick.

“The assistant referee indicates which side is entitled to a goal-kick, corner-kick, or throw-in.”

**The gender agenda**

The role of “linesman” was added to the Laws of the Game (see pp.10–13) in 1891—at a time when the officials were always male. It wasn’t until 1996 that the term was dropped in favor of the gender-neutral “assistant referee.”
Flag signals

The flag is the assistant’s most important piece of equipment, as flag signals are the standard form of communication with a referee (although a buzzer system is sometimes also used). The distinctive red and yellow checkered design of the flag has been proven to be the most eye-catching color combination over a long distance. The following signals are most commonly used during a match.

**OFFSIDE**
The flag is held above the head to signal for an offside offense.

**OFFSIDE POSITION**
A high flag is for far offside, a horizontal flag for middle, and a low flag for near offside.

**SUBSTITUTION**
A flag is held above the head with both hands to indicate a substitution.

**THROW-IN**
A flag is held out to one side, pointing in the direction of play of the team awarded the throw.

Other signals

In addition to using flag signals and a buzzer system, assistant referees employ a variety of other forms of communication. Discrete hand signals, for example, indicate that a close ball has not gone out of play or that no offense has been committed. In return, the referee can use hand signals to inform an assistant the direction in which a throw-in should be taken if he or she is unsure.

**CALLING TIME**
A clenched fist on the chest means 45 minutes have elapsed in the half.

**NO OFFENSE**
The assistant referee shows a lowered palm to indicate that no offense has been committed.

**BEST BEHAVIOR**
The referee has the power relieve an assistant of his or her duties—and make a report to the appropriate authorities—if an assistant referee acts in an improper way.
Fourth official

The fourth official assists the referee with administrative duties before and after the game, helps with assessing players’ equipment, and may be called on to replace another match official (see below). He also sets and holds up electronic display boards, acts as another pair of eyes for the referee, and keeps an extra set of records.

The fourth official as substitute

The fourth official may replace the assistant referee or the referee. If an assistant is injured, for example, the fourth official replaces him automatically. If a referee cannot continue, the fourth official may replace him directly, or an assistant may replace the referee, with the fourth official taking the assistant’s position.

FOURTH OFFICIAL’S DUTIES

The fourth official has the following duties:

ASSISTING WITH RECORD KEEPING

The fourth official keeps a duplicate set of records.

CHECKING PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT

He helps the referee check that the players’ equipment meets the requirements set out in the rules.

OVERSEEING SUBSTITUTIONS

He ensures that substitutions are conducted in an orderly manner.

DISPLAYING INFORMATION

He uses numbered boards or electronic displays to inform the referee of any substitution, and to show the amount of time added at the end of each half.

MAINTAINING CONTROL

He maintains control in the teams’ technical areas, intervening when coaches, bench personnel, or substitutes become argumentative.

ACTING AS AN INTERMEDIARY

He is the contact point between the match officials and non-participants, such as stadium managers, broadcast crews, and ball retrievers.

"THE FOURTH OFFICIAL KEEPS A DUPLICATE SET OF RECORDS AND ACTS AS AN EXTRA PAIR OF EYES FOR THE REFEREE."

SUPPORTING ROLE

Among other duties, the fourth official holds up a display board to indicate any time added on at the end of each half (advised by the referee).
Officials’ equipment

The referee and the assistant referees make use of several different pieces of equipment. These are all designed to help the referee enforce the Laws of the Game (see pp.10–13) effectively.

**EARPIECE AND RADIO SET**
In all top-flight matches, referees and their assistants communicate by using a small radio set.

**ASSISTANT’S FLAGS**
Flags are used by the assistant referees to signal to the referee (see p.25 for assistant’s signals).

**TIMEPIECE**
The referee must have at least one timepiece—such as a wrist watch and a stopwatch.

**CARDS AND NOTEBOOK**
The referee may decide to penalize players by issuing yellow or red cards. Incidents are recorded in a notebook.

**WHISTLE**
The referee blows his whistle to start play, stop or delay play due to a foul or injury, and to end each half.

**PRESSURE GAUGE**
A pressure gauge is used by the referees to check that the ball has been correctly inflated.
Shirts, shorts, and socks

For official games, it is compulsory for players to wear a shirt or jersey, shorts, socks, shoes or cleats (see pp.30–31), and shin pads (see p.32). All the players on a team (except for the goalkeeper) must wear matching uniforms. While shirts may feature stripes or patterned designs, shorts are usually one color.

Referee’s decision
A player who is not wearing the correct uniform will be asked to leave the field by the referee and may only return when the referee confirms that his uniform is correct.