

Free Kick Restarts and Dropped Ball Restarts. *(Updated 12 Oct 05)*

When play needs to be stopped, one of the most difficult aspects for new Referees to understand, is appreciating the differences between the three restarts: **Direct Free Kick** (Laws 12 & 13), **Indirect Free Kick** (Laws 12 & 13), and the **Dropped Ball** (Law 8).

The details shown below cover all the restart instances mentioned in the Laws and more. This detail will be particularly useful, both as a 'study aid' for new candidates preparing for their Referee exam; and as a reminder to existing Referees.

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Section A. Differences Between a Direct Free Kick, an Indirect Free Kick and a Dropped Ball:

It can sometimes be difficult for new trainee Referees to differentiate between a 'Direct Free Kick' restart, an 'Indirect Free Kick' restart, or a 'Dropped Ball' restart.

A Direct Free Kick, an Indirect Free Kick or a Dropped Ball can only be awarded if the Referee needs to stop play whilst the ball is on the field of play.

Direct Free Kick: There are ONLY 10 Direct Free kick offences. The ball must be on the field of play, and the offence must be committed whilst play is in progress. The offence must be committed against the opposing team. A Direct Free Kick cannot be awarded for offences committed between players of the same team. Or for offences committed off the field of play. Or for offences committed by players against the Referee or team officials or spectators etc.

A Direct Free Kick restart cannot be awarded for offences committed whilst the ball is **OUT** of play.

Dropped Ball: A dropped ball is used to restart play, when the Referee under the following circumstances has stopped play:

- due to external interference (such as a dog entering the field of play)
- if a serious injury is suspected
- after a temporary stoppage that becomes necessary while the ball is in play - for any reason not mentioned elsewhere in the Laws of the Game (such as a player losing his shorts!!)
- for any other reason which is not covered by Direct and Indirect Free-kicks.

A dropped ball restart cannot be awarded for offences committed whilst the ball is **OUT** of play.

Indirect Free Kick: There are hundreds of reasons to restart play with an Indirect Free Kick.

Basically, if the stoppage in play is for a foul or an offence that does not merit the award of a Direct Free-Kick, then an Indirect Free Kick is the usual restart.

Please note, that on all the Direct Free Kick, Dropped Ball and Indirect Free Kick restarts, the ball must have been in play when the Referee stops play.

A Free Kick (Direct or Indirect) or a dropped ball restart cannot be awarded for offences committed whilst the ball is **OUT** of play. There are a few exceptions to this. For example, an indirect free kick **is** awarded: When a goal is not scored following encroachment by a team-mate (or if the kicker offends) before a penalty is taken.

Just after half time starts, the Referee stops play when he notices that one team has 12 players.

In these exceptional cases, the offence occurs before the ball is in play.

If an offence occurs before the ball has come back into play during the taking of a goal kick or a throw-in, play is restarted with either the original goal kick or the original throw-in.

Section B. Direct Free Kick Offences.

(or Penalty kick if committed against an opponent by a defender in his own penalty area.)

(To be taken at the place where the incident occurred unless stated otherwise.)

(There are only 10 Direct Free Kick Offences.)

1. **Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent;** - careless, reckless or using excessive force. (Law 12)
2. **Trips or attempts to trip an opponent;** careless, reckless or using excessive force.
(Law 12)
3. **Jumps at an opponent;** careless, reckless or using excessive force. (Law 12)
4. **Charges an opponent;** careless, reckless or using excessive force. (Law 12)
5. **Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent;** careless, reckless or using excessive force. (Law 12)
6. **Pushes an opponent;** careless, reckless or using excessive force. (Law 12)
7. **Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball.** (Law 12)
8. **Holds an opponent.** (Law 12)
9. **Spits at an opponent.** (Law 12)
10. **Handles the ball deliberately** * (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area). (Law 12)

*Handling examples follow:

- A 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded if a goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball outside of his penalty area.
- If after the ball is in play, a goalkeeper who is taking a throw-in, deliberately handles the ball outside of his own penalty area before it has touched another player - a 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded.
- If after the ball is in play, a player taking a throw-in deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player - a 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded (or a penalty kick if the incident occurs inside the player's own penalty area.)

- If, after the ball is in play, a player taking a goal kick deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player - a 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded.
(Note – during the taking of a goal kick, the ball must travel wholly outside of the penalty area before it is deemed to be in play.)
(Note – a penalty kick is awarded if a player (not the goalkeeper) taking a goal kick deliberately handles the ball inside his own penalty area. For this to happen, the player taking the goal kick, would have to kick the ball outside of his penalty area for it to become 'in play'. The ball would then have to return (wind assisted) without being touched by another player, back into the penalty area before being handled by the infringing player.)
- If a goalkeeper takes a corner kick, and after the ball is in play, he deliberately handles the ball outside of his own penalty area before it has touched another player - a 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded.
- If after the ball is in play, a player taking a corner kick deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player - a 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded.
(Note – a penalty kick is awarded if a player (not the goalkeeper) taking a corner kick deliberately handles the ball inside his own penalty area before it has been touched by another player. For this to happen, the player taking the corner kick, would have to kick the ball all the way back into his own penalty area, and deliberately handle it inside his own penalty area before it had been touched by another player. This scenario is very unlikely to ever occur!)
- If a player taking a penalty kick deliberately handles the ball before it has touched another player - a 'Direct Free Kick' is awarded to the defending team.

Section C. Indirect Free Kick Offences.

(Normally, to be taken at the place where the incident occurred unless stated otherwise.)

(Below are listed the common Indirect Free Kick offences - there are many more. The easiest way to remember these, is to understand that if it is not one of the 10 Direct Free Kick offences mentioned above (or a 'Dropped Ball restart), the restart is an Indirect Free Kick).

If a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area, commits any of the following four offences:

- 1. Takes more than six seconds while controlling the ball with his hands before releasing it from his possession.** (Law 12)
- 2. Touches the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player.** (Law 12)
- 3. Touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate.** (Law 12)
(Sometimes referred to as a 'Back-Pass')
- 4. Touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate.** (Law 12)

An indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the Referee commits the following four offences:

- 5. Plays in a dangerous manner.** (Law 12)
- 6. Impedes the progress of an opponent.** (Law 12) (Sometimes referred to as Obstruction.)
- 7. Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands.** (Law 12)

8. Commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player. (Law 12)

(For example, when the Referee stops play to administer a caution for dissent.)

Law 3 – The Number of Players:

If play is stopped by the Referee to administer a caution, the match is restarted by an indirect free kick, to be taken by a player of the opposing team **from the place where the ball was** when play was stopped.

Examples:

9. A bleeding player refuses to leave the field of play when asked to do so by the Referee.

(Law 3)

10. After starting the second half, the Referee notices that one team has 12 players. (Law 3)

11. A substitute enters the field of play without the Referee's permission, if the Referee stops the game, play is restarted with an indirect free kick. (Law 3).

Law 4 – The Players Equipment:

If play is stopped by the Referee to administer a caution, the match is restarted by an indirect free kick, to be taken by a player of the opposing team **from the place where the ball was** when play was stopped.

Examples:

12. A player refuses to tie up his bootlaces. (Law 4)

13. A player refuses to take off a necklace or an earring. (Law 4)

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

If when the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the indirect free kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred.

Example:

14. A player taking a kick-off, touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has been touched by another player. (Law 8)

For any other infringement of the kick-off procedure - the kick-off is retaken.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct (additional examples:)

15. Circumventing the Laws to gain possession of the ball. For example, when a player flicks the ball up with his foot, and then heads it to his goalkeeper. (Law 12 International Decision 3.)

16. A player strikes the Referee. (Law 12 Violent Conduct.)

17. A player strikes a colleague. (Law 12 Violent Conduct.)

18. Referee stops play to administer a caution for dissent. (Law 12 Shows Dissent.)

19. A player uses offensive, or insulting, or abusive language and/or gestures towards any player, a manager, the Referee or anyone else. (Law 12 Sending Off Offence.)

20: **Enters or re-enters the field of play without the Referee's permission.** (Law 12 Cautionable Offence)
(If game stopped to administer a caution, Indirect free kick to be taken by a player of the opposing team **from the place where the ball was when play was stopped.**)

21. **Deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission.** (Law 12 Cautionable Offence)
(The indirect free kick would have to be taken at the point on the boundary line where the player left the field of play – where the offence actually took place.)

22. **Shouting "Leave it" when trying to deceive an opponent.** (Law 12 cautionable Offence Unsporting behaviour.)

23. **Using a colleague's back to gain height when heading the ball.** (Law 12 Cautionable Offence Unsporting behaviour.)

Law 13 – Free Kicks:

24. **A player taking a free kick, touches the ball a second time before it has been touched by another player.** (Law 13)

(Note: A free kick taken by the defending team within its own penalty area must travel outside of the penalty area before it is deemed, to be 'in-play'. If the ball is touched a second time before it has travelled outside of the penalty area, the free kick should be retaken. (Law 13)

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick:

25. **If a team-mate of the player taking the kick enters the penalty area or moves in front of or within 9.5 m (10 yards) of the penalty mark and if the ball rebounds from the goalkeeper, the crossbar or the goal post and is touched by this encroaching player.** (Law 14)

26. **If after the Referee gives the signal for a penalty kick to be taken and, before the ball is in play, a team-mate of the player taking the kick enters the penalty area or moves in front of or within 9.15 (10 yds) of the penalty mark, and the ball does not enter the goal.** (Law 14)

27. **If after the penalty kick has been taken, the kicker touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has touched another player.** (Law 14)

28. **If after the Referee gives the signal for a penalty kick to be taken and, before the ball is in play, the player infringes the Laws of the Game; and the ball subsequently does not enter the goal.** (Law 14)

Law 15 – The Throw-In:

Throw-in taken by other than the goalkeeper.

29. **If after the ball is in play, the thrower touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has touched another player.** (Law 15)

Throw-in taken by the goalkeeper.

30. **If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has touched another player.** (Law 15)

31. **If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball inside his own penalty area before it has touched another player.** (Law 15)

Law 16 – The Goal Kick:

Goal kick taken by a player other than the goalkeeper:

32. If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has touched another player. (Law 16)

Goal kick taken by the goalkeeper:

33. If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball inside his own penalty area before it has touched another player. (Law 16)

(For this to happen, the goalkeeper would have to kick the ball outside of his penalty area for it to become 'in play'. The ball would then have to return (wind assisted) without being touched by another player, back into the penalty area before being handled by the infringing goalkeeper.)

Law 17 – The Corner Kick:

34. If after the ball is in play, a player taking a corner kick touches the ball a second time (except with his hands) before it has touched another player. (Law 17)

35. A goalkeeper takes a corner kick, and after the ball is in play, he deliberately handles the ball inside of his own penalty area before it has touched another player. (Law 17)

(Note – For this to happen, the goalkeeper taking the corner kick, would have to kick the ball all the way back into his own penalty area, and deliberately handle it inside his own penalty area before it had been touched by another player. This scenario is very unlikely to ever occur!)

Section D. Dropped Ball Restarts.

(To be taken normally at the place where the ball was located when play was stopped.)

(Exception - A dropped ball to re-start the match after play has been stopped inside the goal area, takes place on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped.)

Note: The examples shown below that are annotated with the Law Number, are actual references within the Laws. And therefore, questions concerning these are more likely to be asked in a Referee exam.

- 1. If a crossbar becomes displaced or broken.** (Law 1)
- 2. If the ball bursts or becomes defective during the course of a match.** (Law 2)
- 3. If a serious injury occurs.** (Law 5)
- 4. If head injuries occur.** (Law 5)
- 5. Outside (external) interference.** Examples: Dog, crowd, or manager on the field of play. (Law 5)
- 6. Improper conduct by an Assistant Referee or Club Linesman.** (Law 6)
- 7. After a temporary stoppage that becomes necessary while the ball is in play - for any reason not mentioned elsewhere in the Laws of the Game (such as a player losing his shorts!!)** (Law 8)

Some further dropped ball examples:

- 8. Ball deflected by an overhanging tree branch.**

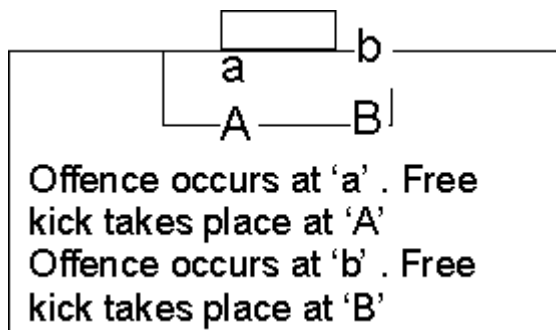
9. A dropped ball may sometimes be used to start a charity match where both of the teams are not really competing against each other.
10. Dropped ball can be used instead of a kick-off in some 6-a-side competitions etc.
11. An offence committed by a player outside of the field of play whilst the ball was in play.
12. A substitute sitting in the technical area throws an object at an opponent who is on the field of play.
13. Dangerous item found on the field of play.

Section E: Special Circumstances Law 8

A free kick awarded to the defending team inside its own goal area can be taken from any point within the goal area.

An indirect free kick awarded to the attacking team in its opponents' goal area is taken from the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. (See diagram below.)

A dropped ball to restart the match after play has been temporarily stopped inside the goal area, takes place on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped. (See diagram below.)



Section F: Restarts after striking, throwing or spitting.

Clarification for the Laws of the Game from FIFA 11 March 2002

The International Football Association Board (IFAB) has provided a new interpretation of where a foul has occurred when there has been no direct contact or when the contact has occurred off the field of play. Prior to now, for example, striking using a thrown object was punished where the action originated.

The IFAB now instructs that all such infringements are to be punished where the contact occurs or would have occurred if the action had been successful, provided this location is on the field of play.

There are a few exceptions to this rule:

1. If the striking or attempted striking was misconduct (i.e., the actual striking contact occurred off the field or was committed against someone other than an opposing player or substitute), the restart is an indirect free kick from the point of initiation. The guilty player should be sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card.
2. If a substitute, standing outside the field of play, strikes or attempts to strike a player on the field of play, the restart is a dropped ball at the place where the ball was when the blow was struck. The substitute is sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card.
3. If a player, taking a throw-in, throws the ball at an opponent, the referee is presented with a gray area involving sound reading of the conditions of the game. This throw could be considered to be trifling, unsporting behaviour, or violent conduct, depending on the force used. If the throw-in was correctly taken and the referee considers that a foul has been committed, the restart would be a direct free kick from the point of contact. If the throw-in was not correctly taken and the referee considers that misconduct has been committed, the restart would be a retake (by the opposing team) of the throw-in, because the game was not restarted properly.

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