



NEW JERSEY YOUTH SOCCER
MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME
2026-27 SEASONAL YEAR



MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

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MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

1 INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide clear communication to youth soccer travel leagues in New Jersey, and recommendations for recreation programs, on the modifications to the Laws of the Game (LOTG) to be utilized when participating in travel league sanctioned events. The Laws of the Game are established by IFAB and modified on a yearly basis. US Soccer has the authority to modify Laws of the Game for youth and amateur matches. The modifications listed herein do not cover futsal or other forms of soccer.

This edition is based on the **IFAB** Laws of the Game 2026/27, which took effect on July 1, 2026. Where the 2026/27 Laws introduced a change affecting the youth game, this document states whether New Jersey Youth Soccer has adopted the change and, where applicable, how it is to be applied. Positions were developed by NJYS in consultation with the New Jersey State Referee Committee and the member travel leagues.

Several of the 2026/27 changes are adopted for full-sided play but are not applied in small-sided play. For the purposes of this document, **full-sided** means 11v11 (13U - 19U) and **small-sided** means 9v9 (11U - 12U), 7v7 (8U - 10U) and 4v4 (6U - 8U).

Summary of Changes for 2026-27

The table below summarizes every **IFAB** Law change that bears on NJYS play and the NJYS position on each. Full detail appears in the Law-by-Law sections that follow.

Law	2026/27 IFAB change	NJYS position for the youth game
Law 3	Ten-second time limit for a substituted player to leave the field of play	Adopted for full-sided play. Not adopted for small-sided (4v4, 7v7 or 9v9) play.
Law 4	“Jewelry” replaced by “accessories”; accessories permitted if not dangerous and safely and securely covered	Adopted as written. Referee education required; USSF guidance included.
Law 5	Advantage may be played when a restart is taken incorrectly and the ball is in play	Adopted . No NJYS modification.
Law 5	Player assessed or treated on the field, or whose injury stops play, must leave and remain off for one minute after the restart	Adopted with an NJYS player-safety modification for substitution and short-handed situations.
Law 5	Competitions may provide referees, ARs and fourth officials with body cameras	Not adopted . Body cameras are not permitted outside the professional game per US Soccer.
Law 5	Competitions may use VAR, goal line technology and semi-automated offside technology	Not applicable to NJYS competitions.

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Law	2026/27 IFAB change	NJYS position for the youth game
Law 8	Dropped ball clarified to include the team that would have taken the restart; dropped at the point of interference	Adopted. No NJYS modification.
Laws 10 & 14	Accidental double touch at a penalty kick and in a shoot-out confirmed in Law; automatic caution removed when kicker and goalkeeper offend simultaneously	Adopted. No NJYS modification.
Law 12	No caution for a DOGSO offence where advantage is played and a goal is scored	Adopted. No NJYS modification.
Law 12	Location and number of attackers added to the DOGSO considerations	Adopted. No NJYS modification.
Law 12 (2025-2026 IFAB Change)	Five-second visual countdown of a goalie's 8 second possession; corner-kick awarded to the opponents	Adopted for full-sided play. Not applied for small-sided (4v4, 7v7 or 9v9) play.
Law 15	Five-second visual countdown at a delayed throw-in; throw-in awarded to the opponents	Adopted for full-sided play. Not applied in small-sided play.
Law 16	Five-second visual countdown at a delayed goal kick; corner kick awarded to the opponents	Adopted for full-sided play. Not applied in small-sided play.
Protocol	'Only the captain' guidelines become compulsory for all competitions starting on or after 1 July 2027	Adopted for full-sided play (U13+) Not applied in small-sided play.

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2 MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

2.1 Law 1: The Field of Play

2.1.1 US Soccer PDI 4v4 Field

	Field: 25-35 yards (length) x 15-25 yards (width) Max Goal Size: Height 4' x Width 6' anchored Corner Flags: Not needed (there is no corner arc). Goal kicks and corner kicks taken in general vicinity of the respective goal or corner. Goal size: Height 4' x Width 6' Goal area: None Penalty area: None Penalty Arc & Center Circle: None Penalty spot: None Build-out line: None
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2.1.2 US Soccer PDI 7v7 Field

	Field: 55-70 yards (length) x 35-45 yards (width) Max Goal size: 7v7 Height 6.5' x Width 18.5' anchored Goal area: 4 yards (length) x 8 yards (width) Corner flags: Yes (but not required) Penalty area: 12 yards (length) x 24 yards (width) Penalty Arc & Center Circle: 8-yards Penalty spot: 10-yards Build-out line: Yes, marked equidistant between the penalty area line and halfway line.
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2.1.3 US Soccer PDI 9v9 Field

	Field: 70-80 yards (length) x 45-55 yards (width) Max Goal size: 9v9 Height 7' x Width 21' anchored Recommended: Height 6.5' x Width 18.5' anchored Goal area: 5 yards (length) x 12 yards (width) Corner flags: Yes (but not required) Penalty area: 14 yards (length) x 36 yards (width) Penalty Arc & Center Circle: 8-yards Penalty spot: 10-yards Build-out line: None
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2.1.4 US Soccer PDI 11v11 Field

No changes from the Laws of the Game for the maximum or minimum size or layout for an 11v11 field.

2.2 Law 2: The Ball

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The size of the ball shall be modified based upon the Age Group playing.

Age Group	Ball Size
13U – 19U (11v11)	5
11U – 12U (9v9)	4
8U – 10U (7v7)	4
6U – 8U (4v4)	3

2.3 Law 3: The Players

2.3.1 Travel Player Passes

- a) Players must be noted on the game day roster and present a player pass
 - to the competition authority in the manner required (e.g. digital check-in or physical pass) or
 - In the absence of a neutral competition representative, the competition authority may delegate the credential check to the Referee prior to entering the game.
- b) Validated passes are required for each player and coach who are active on a team roster, in accordance with the travel league member policies.

2.3.2 Roster Size and Number of Field Players

Travel Leagues set the maximum game day roster size based upon the Division (Age) of Play

Age of Play	Maximum Game Day Roster Size	Maximum # of Field Players	Minimum # of Field Players
13U – 19U (11v11)	18	11 (10+ goalie)	7 (6+ goalie)
11U – 12U (9v9)	16	9 (8+ goalie)	6 (5+ goalie)
8U – 10U (7v7)	14	7 (6+ goalie)	5 (4+ goalie)
6U – 8U (4v4)	10	4	4

2.3.3 Substitutions

2.3.3.1 Number of Substitutions

Substitutions shall be unlimited except where specified otherwise in the rules and regulations defined within the local competition authority.

2.3.3.2 Timing of Substitutions

1. Substitutions can occur at any stoppage of play and with the consent of the referee except where specified otherwise in the rules and regulations defined.
2. Unrestricted substitutions are provided by either team after a goal, end of the half, goal kick, before a drop ball, and injuries.
3. Coaches are reminded that players should be “up and ready” when requesting substitutions.

2.3.3.3 Leaving the Field of Play

Unless otherwise directed by the referee, a player who is being substituted must leave the field by the nearest point on the touchline of the player’s Team Technical area. In all cases, the Player’s safety and separation from the opponent and opponent’s fans should be considered when a Referee instructs a player on where to leave the field.

2.3.3.4 Ten-Second Time Limit to Leave the Field of Play

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IFAB The 2026/27 Laws of the Game require a substituted player to be off the field of play within ten seconds of the substitution board being shown or, where there is no board, of the referee's signal for the substitution to take place. If the ten seconds are exceeded the player must still leave, the substitute may not enter, play restarts, the substitution cannot be cancelled nor a different substitute used, and the substitute may enter only with the referee's permission at the first stoppage after one minute (running clock) has elapsed following the restart. The player being substituted is cautioned only if the delay is excessive.

Level of Play	NJYS Application
Full-sided (11v11)	ADOPTED. Referees are to use the ten-second limit to manage time wasting by a team.
Small-sided (9v9, 7v7, 4v4)	NOT APPLIED. Referees are to manage this only in extreme situations where a coach is using substitutions to delay the game.

Guidance to referees:

- Youth teams frequently substitute dynamically, with players entering the field at the same time as players are exiting. This is normal and is not time wasting. The ten-second limit exists to address deliberate delays.
- Section 2.3.3.3 requires a player being substituted to leave at the nearest point on the touchline. Referees shall not direct a player to leave anywhere other than the touchline of their team's technical area and shall take the distance the player must travel into account when applying the ten seconds.
- Where a player is at or crossing the boundary line as the countdown ends, the substitute should be allowed to enter.
- The referee may decline to apply the limit where an injury clearly prevents the player from leaving in time, or where the player cannot leave at the nearest point for safety or security reasons.
- The referee may visually count down the last five seconds with a raised hand.

2.4 Law 4: The Player's Equipment

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous. Accessories are permitted if they are not dangerous and are safely and securely covered. Dangerous items must be removed and may not be taped or covered. NJYS encourages referees to exercise judgment and permit non-traditional items that are pertinent to an individual's culture and/or religion. A referee assigned by a certified USSF assignor is the authority.

IFAB The 2026/27 Laws of the Game replaced the term "jewelry" with "accessories" and removed the blanket prohibition on jewelry. NJYS **ADOPTS** the change as written with the guidance provided by USSF (see Appendix). The test in every case is whether the item is dangerous and whether it can be safely and securely covered. The same standard applies to all match participants, including match officials, who may wear accessories if they are not dangerous. Players must be inspected before the start of the match and substitutes before they enter the field of play.

Permitted examples (not dangerous, and safely and securely covered)	Prohibited examples (dangerous, or cannot be made safe)
• Medical alert bracelet, taped flat to the skin	• Earrings or studs, including taped-over earrings

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Permitted examples (not dangerous, and safely and securely covered)	Prohibited examples (dangerous, or cannot be made safe)
- Religious item worn under the kit and secured - Soft fabric or rubber wristband, no hard edges - Smooth wedding band, taped over - Fitness tracker worn during play, secured via a vest or strap under the playing shirt	- Rings or bracelets with stones, prongs or hard edges - Necklaces or chains that cannot be safely covered - Smartwatches or watches

2.4.1 Uniforms

Travel Leagues recommend that the home team wears its dark uniform and the visiting team wears its light uniform to avoid conflict and need for changing on site. In the event of uniform conflict, the home team should be prepared to change its uniforms.

2.5 Law 5: The Referee

The age-based framework should be followed and is recommended by the New Jersey State Referee Committee. No referee is required for 4v4 competition.

2.5.1 Advantage on Incorrectly Taken Restart

IFAB The following **2026/27 Laws of the Game** changes are **ADOPTED** with no NJYS modification. The referee may allow play to continue when a restart (free kick, throw-in and so on) is taken incorrectly and the ball is in play, where the opposing team gains possession and will benefit from the advantage. If the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time or within a few seconds, the referee penalizes the offence or orders a retake.

2.5.2 Off-Field Treatment and Assessment - One Minute

IFAB Under the **2026/27 Laws of the Game** an outfield player must leave the field of play and remain off it for one minute (running clock) after the restart where play is stopped because the player has an actual or suspected injury, where the referee has signaled for medical staff to enter, or where the referee has asked the player if they require on-field medical attention and the player has requested it. Medical staff should be given sufficient time for an initial assessment on the field but should not treat the player on the field unless the injury is serious.

NJYS **ADOPTS** the provision with the following modification, so that a team is not penalized on the field for prioritizing the safety of a youth player.

Competition Type	NJYS Application
Unlimited substitutions	Allow the player to be subbed off. If no substitutions are available, the player should be allowed to remain on the field without penalty. If subs are available and are not used, the player should leave the field for one minute.
Limited substitutions	Allow the player to be subbed off according to the substitution rules for the competition. If a field player is not subbed off, the player must leave the field for one minute.

NOTE: The goalkeeper does not need to leave the field of play.

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Player safety is the primary concern. A team shall not be penalized by preventing re-entry where the team would be left playing short.

Under the Laws, a player is not required to leave the field for one minute when:

- the player indicates that they do not require medical attention, except where play was stopped for the injury;
- the player voluntarily leaves the field without delaying the restart;
- a goalkeeper is injured;
- a goalkeeper and an outfield player have collided and need attention;
- players from the same team have collided and need attention;
- a severe injury has occurred, especially a head injury such as a concussion, a cardiac issue or a life-threatening event;
- a player is injured as the result of a physical offence for which the opponent is cautioned or sent off; or
- a penalty kick has been awarded and the injured player will be the kicker.

The one-minute period begins when play restarts. The player may return only with the referee's permission - from the touchline if the ball is in play, or from any boundary line if the ball is out of play. If the half ends before the minute has elapsed, the player may return at the start of the next period.

This provision does not alter the NJYS Concussion Procedure and Protocol. A player with an actual or suspected concussion is removed from play and is subject to the return-to-play requirements of that protocol.

2.5.3 Body Cameras

IFAB **NOT ADOPTED**. The 2026/27 Laws of the Game permit competitions to provide referees, assistant referees and fourth officials with body cameras. **US Soccer has stated that body cameras are not permitted outside the professional game.** Body cameras shall not be used by match officials in NJYS-sanctioned play.

2.5.4 Technology

The use of electronic communication devices or technology by referees to officiate a match is not permitted in the NJYS youth game.

IFAB The following 2026/27 Laws of the Game changes are **NOT APPLICABLE** to the NJYS youth game. The 2026/27 Laws permit competitions to use technology to assist the referee in relation to the video assistant referee (VAR) protocol, ball in and out of play (goal line technology) and offside (semi-automated offside technology). None of these are used in NJYS-sanctioned competition, and referees and other on-field match officials are prohibited from any unofficial use of video replay or other electronic equipment.

The prohibition on reviewing video replay does not apply to NJYS, its member leagues, or NJYS-sanctioned competitions when video replay is reviewed for the limited purpose of investigating, determining, or correcting disciplinary matters.

2.6 Law 6: The Other Match Officials

Diagonal system of control will be used in all matches. A volunteer who helps the Referee when there are no Assistant Referees available:

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- Shall help when the ball is in touch (out of play) by raising the flag, and shall not perform any other duty
- Shall not coach and should not be vocal throughout the match

2.7 Law 7: The Duration of Match

2.7.1 *NJYS guidelines are as follows unless specified otherwise in the rules and regulations defined within the local competition authority.*

Age Group	Time	Halftime (breaks)
17U - 19U (11v11)	2 forty-five (45) minute halves	10 to 15 minutes
15U - 16U (11v11)	2 forty (40) minute halves	10 minutes
13U - 14U (11v11)	2 thirty-five (35) minute halves	10 minutes
11U - 12U (9v9)	2 thirty (30) minute halves	10 minutes
8U - 10U (7v7)	2 thirty (30) minute halves	10 minutes
6U - 8U (4v4)	4 ten (10) minute quarters	5 minutes

2.7.2 *Referees shall include instructions, if applicable, to coaches on the timing of “cooling” breaks and/or “drinks” breaks prior to each half.*

- “cooling” breaks (60 secs — 3 mins) to allow the player’s body temperature to fall
- “drinks” breaks (max 1 min) for player hydration

Allowance for time lost includes substitutions, assessment and removal of injured players, and time wasting. Where the ten-second substitution limit and the five-second throw-in and goal kick countdowns are not applied in small-sided play, referees are reminded to deal with delay by adding time, as they always have.

2.8 Law 8: The Start and Restart of Play

2.8.1 4v4 Modifications

In the 4v4 game, “Kick-ins” and “dribble-ins” are acceptable forms of restart when the ball is out of play. Free kicks, throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks are used to start or restart play.

- a) 4v4 Kick-ins and/or dribble-ins are acceptable
- b) If used, all Kick-ins are in-direct

2.8.2 Dropped Ball

ADOPTED - no NJYS modification. Two clarifications apply for 2026/27. The team that “would have gained possession” now expressly includes the team that would have taken the restart in a situation where the ball would have gone out of play. Where play is stopped because the ball contacted a match official or an outside agent, the ball is dropped at the position of that interference or contact rather than at the position of the ball when play was stopped.

2.9 Law 9: Ball In and Out of Play

No NJYS Modifications.

2.10 Law 10: Determining the Outcome of a Match

No NJYS Modifications.

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IFAB The following 2026/27 Laws of the Game changes are **ADOPTED** with no NJYS modification. In penalties (a penalty shoot-out), if the kicker accidentally kicks the ball with both feet simultaneously, or the ball touches their non-kicking foot or leg immediately after the kick, the kick is retaken if the ball enters the goal and is recorded as missed if it does not. The automatic caution of the kicker where the kicker and the goalkeeper commit an offence at the same time has been removed.

2.11 Law 11: Offside

Number of Players	Offside	Determination line
13U – 19U (11v11)	Yes	Center line (no change)
11U – 12U (9v9)	Yes	Center line (no change)
8U – 10U (7v7)	Yes	Build-out line
6U – 8U (4v4)	No	Offside shall not be called

2.11.1 11v11 and 9v9 Game

No NJYS Modifications.

2.11.2 7v7

- The **build-out line** on the attacking half of the field shall denote where an offside offense may be called.
- Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense when on the attacking half of the field between the halfway line and the build-out line.
- Players may only be penalized for an offside offense when on the attacking half of the field between the build-out line and the opposing goal line when the ball is last played by a teammate.

2.11.3 4v4 Game

- Offside shall not be enforced.

2.12 Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct

2.12.1 Heading

Number of Players	Deliberate heading in games
13U – 19U (11v11)	Allowed
12U (9v9)	Allowed*
11U (9v9)	Not allowed*
8U – 10U (7v7)	Not allowed*
6U – 8U (4v4)	Not allowed*

Notes:

*See your member league for rules on how violations during games are implemented.

*In a controlled and individual environment (where heading is an isolated skill being taught away from any form of opposition or other aspects of the game), the use of lightweight balls (foam, balloon, etc.) would be acceptable for teaching heading technique.

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2.12.2 Goalkeeper Punting

2.12.2.1 9v9 and 11v11

Goalkeeper punting is permitted at 9v9 (11U – 12U) and 11v11 (13U – 19U).

At 9v9, goalkeeper from the defending penalty area cannot distribute the ball directly (not touched by another player) into the opponents' penalty area. If this infraction occurs, the restart will be an indirect free kick (IDK) at the halfway line (midfield).

2.12.2.2 7v7 Game

Goalkeeper punting or dropkicking after a save is not permitted at the 7v7 level (9U-10U). If a goalkeeper punts or drop kicks the ball, an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opponent and taken on the penalty area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

2.12.2.3 4v4 Game

Goalkeepers are not permitted at the 4v4 level.

2.12.3 Denying a Goal or an Obvious Goal-Scoring Opportunity (DOGSO)

IFAB The following 2026/27 Laws of the Game changes are **ADOPTED** with no NJYS modification.

Where the referee plays advantage following an offence that denied an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the non-offending team scores as a result, there is no disciplinary sanction. The same applies where a player unsuccessfully attempts to prevent a goal with the hand or arm and advantage is played resulting in a goal. If a goal does not result, the offence is dealt with as before and the caution stands. Serious foul play and violent conduct still result in a sending-off regardless of whether a goal is scored.

The considerations for DOGSO now include the location and number of attackers in addition to defenders. The considerations are the distance between the offence and the goal, the general direction of play, the likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball, and the location and number of defenders and attackers. The additional consideration provides context; it does not displace the core assessment of distance, defenders, direction and control, and does not override doubt on that core test.

2.12.4 Goalkeeper Control of the Ball

IFAB The following 2025/26 Laws of the Game change institutes a corner kick being awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their own penalty area, controls the ball with their hand(s) or arm(s) for more than eight seconds before releasing it. The referee decides when control begins and visually counts down the last five seconds with a raised hand. The ball is placed in the corner area nearest to the point where the ball passed over the goal line or, where the goalkeeper was penalized, nearest to the goalkeeper's position.

This change is **ADOPTED** for the full-sided game and **NOT APPLIED** for the small-sided game.

Level of Play	NJYS Application
Full-sided (11v11)	ADOPTED.
Small-sided (9v9, 7v7, 4v4)	NOT APPLIED.

2.13 Law 13: Free Kicks

2.13.1 Encroachment (Proper distance from a direct or indirect free kick)

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Age Group	Number of players	Encroachment
13U – 19U (11v11)	11v11	10 yards
11U – 12U (9v9)	9v9	8 yards
8U – 10U (7v7)	7v7	8 yards
6U – 8U (4v4)	4v4	3 yards

2.13.2 4v4 Game

All free kicks are indirect.

2.14 Law 14: Penalty Kicks

The spot from which a penalty shall be taken is modified for the 9v9 and 7v7 games.

Age Group	Number of players	Penalty Mark
13U – 19U (11v11)	11v11	12 yards (no change)
11U – 12U (9v9)	9v9	10 yards
8U – 10U (7v7)	7v7	10 yards
6U – 8U (4v4)	4v4	No penalty kicks

IFAB The following 2026/27 Laws of the Game changes are **ADOPTED** with no NJYS modification. If the kicker accidentally kicks the ball with both feet simultaneously, or the ball touches their non-kicking foot or leg immediately after the kick, the kick is retaken if the ball enters the goal, and an indirect free kick is awarded against the kicker's team if it does not. A deliberate second touch remains an indirect free kick. The automatic caution of the kicker has been removed where the goalkeeper and the kicker commit an offence at the same time; in that situation the penalty kick is retaken, unless the kicker committed one of the offences that carries its own sanction - kicking the ball backwards, illegal feinting, a teammate of the identified kicker taking the kick, or unsporting behavior by the kicker - in which case an indirect free kick is awarded and the kicker is cautioned.

2.15 Law 15: Throw-in

2.15.1 7V7, 9v9 and 11v11 Game

IFAB Under the 2026/27 Laws of the Game where a player is unfairly delaying the taking of a throw-in for their team, the referee whistles and signals the start of a five-second countdown, counting down visually with a raised hand. If the throw-in has not been taken by the end of the five seconds it is awarded to the opposing team, taken from the same position. A caution is issued only if the offending player or a teammate then excessively delays the opposing team's restart.

This modification is **ADOPTED** for full-sided competition and **NOT APPLIED** for small-sided competition.

Level of Play	NJYS Application
Full-sided (11v11)	ADOPTED.
Small-sided (9v9, 7v7, 4v4)	NOT APPLIED.

Guidance to referees:

- The countdown starts once the ball is available to be thrown in. Time spent chasing a ball well off the field is not counted.

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- The youth game is typically played with one ball and a backup ball at midfield between the teams. That is materially different from a professional match with balls positioned around the field and a ball crew available. Deal with ordinary retrieval delays the way you always have, by adding time, and use the countdown only for a true delaying tactic.
- The countdown may also be started where a player deliberately causes delay by slowly retrieving the ball or taking up an incorrect position for the throw-in.
- A player who is in the process of throwing the ball as the countdown ends should not be penalized.

2.15.2 7v7 Game

Travel leagues recognize that some competitions may permit a second attempt at a throw-in for the U9 and U10 ages.

2.15.3 4v4 Game

In the 4v4 game “Kick-ins” and “Dribble-ins” are acceptable forms of restarts as an alternative to a Throw-in. If used, all “Kick-ins” are indirect. Local competition authorities should specify the method of restart from the touchline.

2.16 Law 16: Goal Kick

2.16.1 7V7, 9v9 and 11v11 Game

IFAB Under the 2026/27 Laws of the Game, where a player is unfairly delaying the taking of a goal kick for their team, the referee whistles and signals the start of a five-second countdown, counting down visually with a raised hand. If the goal kick has not been taken by the end of the five seconds, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team on the side of the field closest to where the goal kick was to be taken. A caution is issued only if the offending player or a teammate then excessively delays the opposing team’s restart.

This modification is **ADOPTED** for the full-sided game and **NOT APPLIED** for the small-sided game.

Level of Play	NJYS Application
Full-sided (11v11)	ADOPTED.
Small-sided (9v9, 7v7, 4v4)	NOT APPLIED.

The countdown may be started where a player deliberately causes delay by slowly retrieving the ball or by putting the ball in an incorrect position for the goal kick. As with throw-ins, ordinary ball-retrieval delay in the youth game is handled by adding time, not by awarding a corner kick. A player who is in the process of kicking the ball as the countdown ends should not be penalized.

2.16.2 7v7 Game - Build-out line

Travel leagues have aligned for the use of build-out lines at the 7v7 level (i.e., U9 and U10).

- On a goal kick, a defensive free kick inside the penalty area, or when the goalkeeper has possession of the ball with their hands, the opposing team must move behind the build-out line until the ball is put back into play.
- The goalkeeper can pass, throw, or roll the ball to put it back into play (punts and drop kicks are not allowed).

MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

- On a goal kick or when the goalkeeper has possession of the ball with their hands, the opposing team may cross the build-out line when:
 - The goalkeeper changes possession from their hand to play the ball with their feet, or
 - a second touch is made by another player on the goalkeeper's team, or
 - the ball comes to a complete stop, or
 - the ball crosses the build-out line.

2.16.2.1 7v7 Build-out Line Practical Applications

- Ideally, the goalkeeper will wait to put the ball into play once all opponents are past the build-out line
- However, the goalkeeper can put the ball into play sooner but he or she does so accepting the positioning of the opponents and the consequences of how play resumes
- To support the intent of the development rule, coaches and referees should be mindful of any intentional delays being caused by opponents not retreating in a timely manner or encroaching over the build-out line prior to the ball being put into play
- Coaches are responsible for addressing these types of issues with their players
- Referees can manage the situation with misconduct if deemed appropriate.
- Referees should be flexible when enforcing the 8 second rule and counting the time of possession should only begin when all opponents have moved behind the build-out line.

2.16.3 4v4 Game

Goal kicks shall be taken in the general vicinity of the respective goal.

2.17 Law 17: Corner Kick

2.17.1 7V7, 9v9 and 11v11 Game

No changes.

2.17.2 4v4 Game

A corner kick is to be taken in the vicinity of the intersection of the goal line and touchline.

3 ONLY THE CAPTAIN PROTOCOL

IFAB The LOTG permits competitions to implement the 'Only the Captain' guidelines. The protocol becomes compulsory for all competitions starting on or after 1 July 2027, and US Soccer requires implementations for all competitions commencing after that date.

This modification is **ADOPTED** for the full-sided game and **NOT APPLIED** for the small-sided game.

Level of Play	NJYS Application
Full-sided (11v11)	ADOPTED.
Small-sided (9v9, 7v7, 4v4)	NOT APPLIED.

- Normal interactions between players and the referee are allowed and remain important.
- Any player, including the captain, who shows dissent by word or action will be cautioned.
- Following key incidents or decisions, only one player from each team - usually the captain - may approach the referee and must do so respectfully. Players who approach or surround the referee when not permitted may be cautioned.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

- Team captains are responsible for helping to direct their teammates away from the referee. The referee may delay the restart to allow a captain time to speak with teammates.
- Where the goalkeeper is the captain, the referee must be told no later than the coin toss which player is nominated to approach the referee instead. Only the goalkeeper or the nominated player, not both, may approach.
- Youth option: the referee may initiate the protocol by whistle and signal, creating a captain-only zone extending 4 m (4.5 yds) around the referee. Only each team's captain may enter. A single unauthorized player entering is cautioned for dissent by action; where more than one player from a team enters, at least one must be cautioned and the incident must be reported to the appropriate authorities after the match.

4 APPENDIX

4.1 USSF Guidance on Accessories Associated with Law 4: Player's Equipment



OTHER CHANGES · LAW 4

ACCESSORIES · SAFETY, NOT TERMINOLOGY

 **PREVIOUS**

"JEWELRY" PROHIBITED

- Term focused on the item rather than the risk.
- All jewelry had to be removed, with limited room for judgment.

 **NEW · 2026/27**

"ACCESSORIES" · RISK BASED

- Term "jewelry" replaced by "accessories".
- Permitted if not dangerous AND safely / securely covered.
- Dangerous items must be removed entirely – no covering option.
- Applies to all match participants, including match officials.
- Referee's judgment is final.

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OTHER CHANGES · LAW 4

ACCESSORIES – EXAMPLES

 **PERMITTED EXAMPLES**

Not dangerous, and safely and securely covered.

- ✓ Medical alert bracelet, taped flat to the skin
- ✓ Religious item worn under the kit and secured
- ✓ Soft fabric or rubber wristband, no hard edges
- ✓ Smooth wedding band, taped over
- ✓ Fitness trackers worn during play secured via a vest under the playing shirt

 **PROHIBITED EXAMPLES**

Dangerous, or cannot be made safe.

- ✗ Earrings or studs, including taped-over earrings
- ✗ Rings or bracelets with stones, prongs, or hard edges
- ✗ Necklaces or chains that cannot be safely covered
- ✗ Smartwatches or watches

Note: Match officials' watches and timing devices form part of their required equipment and are not affected by these restrictions.

THE TEST Is it dangerous? Can it be safely and securely covered? If it stays a risk, it comes off. Same standard for players and officials, grassroots to national – referee's judgment is final.

U.S. REFEREEING WAY 32

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