

LAW 11 – OFF-SIDE AND ON-SIDE IN GENERAL PLAY

DEFINITION

At the start of a game all players are on-side. As the match progresses players may find themselves in an off-side position. Such players are then liable to be penalized until they become on-side again.

In general play a player is off-side if the player is in front of a team-mate who is carrying the ball, or in front of a team-mate who last played the ball.

Off-side means that a player is temporarily out of the game. Such players are liable to be penalized if they take part in the game.

In general play, a player can be put on-side either by an action of a team-mate or by an action of an opponent. However, the off-side player cannot be put on-side if the off-side player interferes with play; or moves forward, towards the ball, or fails to move 10 metres away from the place where the ball lands.

11.1 OFF-SIDE IN GENERAL PLAY

- (a) A player who is in an off-side position is liable to penalty only if the player does one of three things:

Interferes with play or,

Moves forward, towards the ball or

Fails to comply with the 10-Metre Law (Law 11.4).

A player who is in an off-side position is not automatically penalised.

A player who receives an unintentional throw-forward is not off-side.

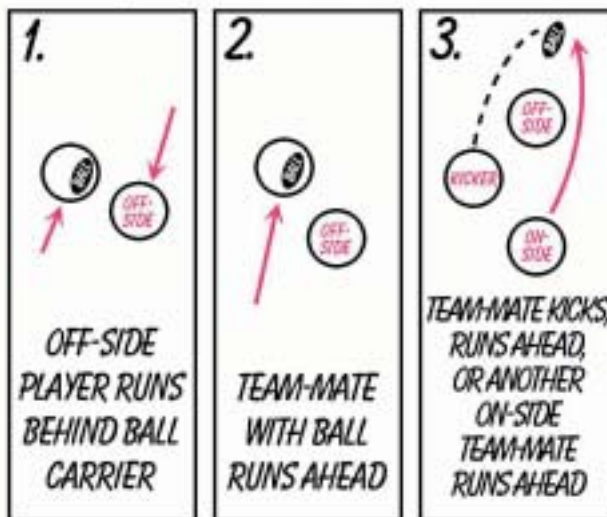
A player can be off-side in the in-goal.

- (b) **Off-side and interfering with play.** A player who is off-side must not take part in the game. This means the player must not play the ball or obstruct an opponent.
- (c) **Off-side and moving forward.** When a team-mate of an off-side player has kicked ahead, the off-side player must not move towards opponents who are waiting to play the ball, or move towards the place where the ball lands, until the player has been put on-side.

11.2 BEING PUT ON-SIDE BY THE ACTION OF A TEAM-MATE

In general play, there are four ways by which an off-side player can be put on-side by actions of that player or of team-mates;

- (a) **Action by the player.** When the off-side player runs behind the team-mate who last kicked, touched or carried the ball, the player is put on-side.
- (b) **Action by the ball-carrier.** When a team-mate carrying the ball runs in front of the off-side player, that player is put on-side.
- (c) **Action by the kicker or other on-side player.** When the kicker, or team-mate who was level with or behind the kicker when (or after) the ball was kicked, runs in front of the off-side player, the player is put on-side.
- (d) **When running forward,** the team-mate may be in touch or in touch-in-goal, but that team-mate must return to the playing area to put the other player on-side.

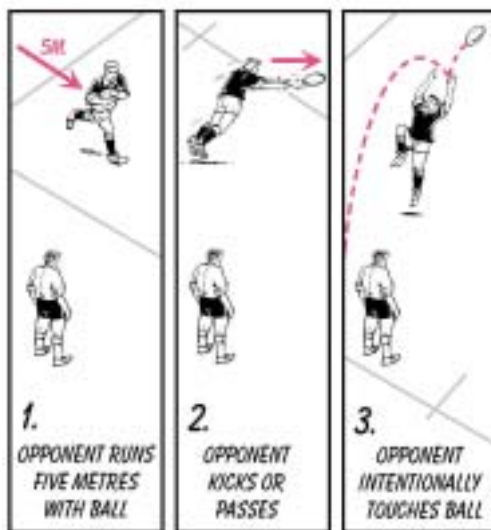


PLAYER MADE ON-SIDE BY TEAM-MATE

11.3 BEING PUT ON-SIDE BY OPPONENTS

In general play, there are three ways by which an off-side player can be put on-side by an action of the opposing team. These three ways do not apply to a player who is offside under the 10-Metre Law.

- (a) **Runs 5 metres with ball.** When an opponent carrying the ball runs 5 metres, the off-side player is put on-side.
- (b) **Kicks or passes.** When an opponent kicks or passes the ball, the off-side player is put on-side.
- (c) **Intentionally touches ball.** When an opponent intentionally touches the ball but does not catch it, the off-side player is put on-side.



PLAYER PUT ON-SIDE BY OPPONENTS

11.4 OFF-SIDE UNDER THE 10-METRE LAW

- (a) When a team-mate of an off-side player has kicked ahead, the off-side player is considered to be taking part in the game if the player is in front of an imaginary line across the field which is 10 metres from the opponent waiting to play the ball, or from where the ball lands or may land. The off-side player must immediately move behind the imaginary 10-metre line. While moving away, the player must not obstruct an opponent.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

- (b) While moving away, the off-side player cannot be put on-side by any action of the opposing team. However, before the player has moved the full 10 metres, the player can be put on-side by any on-side team-mate who runs in front of the player.
- (c) When a player who is off-side under the 10-Metre Law charges an opponent waiting to catch the ball, the referee blows the whistle at once and the off-side player is penalised. Delay may prove dangerous to the opponent.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (d) When a player who is off-side under the 10-Metre Law plays the ball which has been misfielded by an opponent, the off-side player is penalised.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (e) The 10-Metre Law is not altered by the fact that the ball has hit a goal post or a crossbar. What matters is where the ball lands. An off-side player must not be in front of the imaginary 10-metre line across the field.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (f) The 10-Metre Law does not apply when a player kicks the ball, and an opponent charges down the kick, and a team-mate of the kicker who was in front of the imaginary 10-metre line across the field then plays the ball. The opponent was not 'waiting to play the ball' and the team-mate is on-side.
Penalty: When a player is penalised for being off-side in general play, the opposing team chooses either a penalty kick at the place of infringement or a scrum at the place where the offending team last played the ball. If it was last played in that team's in-goal, the scrum is formed 5 metres from the goal-line in line with where it was played.
- (g) If more than one player is off-side and moving forward after a team-mate has kicked ahead, the place of infringement is the position of the off-side player closest to an opponent waiting for the ball, or closest to where the ball lands.

11.5 BEING PUT ON-SIDE UNDER THE 10-METRE LAW

- (a) The off-side player must retire behind the imaginary 10-metre line across the field, otherwise the player is liable to be penalised.

- (b) While retiring, the player can be put on-side before moving behind the imaginary 10-metre line by any of the three actions of the player's team listed above in 11.2. However, the player cannot be put on-side by any action of the opposing team.

11.6 ACCIDENTAL OFF-SIDE

- (a) When an off-side player cannot avoid being touched by the ball or by a team-mate carrying it, the player is accidentally off-side. If the player's team gains no advantage from this, play continues. If the player's team gains an advantage, a scrum is formed with the opposing team throwing in the ball.
- (b) When a player hands the ball to a team-mate in front of the first player, the receiver is off-side. Unless the receiver is considered to be intentionally off-side (in which case a penalty kick is awarded), the receiver is accidentally off-side and a scrum is formed with the opposing team throwing in the ball.

11.7 OFF-SIDE AFTER A KNOCK-ON

When a player knocks-on and an off-side team-mate next plays the ball, the off-side player is liable to penalty if playing the ball prevented an opponent from gaining an advantage.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

11.8 OFF-SIDE AT SCRUM, RUCK, MAUL OR LINE-OUT

At a scrum, ruck, maul or line-out, a player is off-side if the player is in front of the off-side line as described in the relevant parts of those Laws.

11.9 PUTTING ON-SIDE A PLAYER RETIRING DURING A RUCK, MAUL, SCRUM OR LINE-OUT

When a ruck, maul, scrum or line-out forms, a player who is off-side and is retiring as required by Law remains off-side even when the opposing team wins possession and the ruck, maul, scrum or line-out has ended. The player is put on-side by retiring behind the applicable off-side line. No other action of the off-side player and no action of that player's team-mates can put the off-side player on-side.

If the player remains off-side the player can be put on-side only by the action of the opposing team. There are two such actions:

Opponent runs 5 meters with ball. When an opponent carrying the ball has run 5 meters, the off-side player is put on-side. An off-side player is not put on-side when an opponent passes the ball. Even if the opponents pass the ball several times, their action does not put the off-side player on-side.

Opponent kicks. When an opponent kicks the ball, the off-side player is put on-side.

11.10 LOITERING

A player who remains in an off-side position is loitering. A loiterer who prevents the opposing team from playing the ball as they wish is taking part in the game, and is penalised. The referee makes sure that the loiterer does not benefit from being put on-side by the opposing team's action.

Penalty: Penalty Kick