

LAW 19 – TOUCH AND LINE-OUT

DEFINITIONS

‘Kicked directly into touch’ means that the ball was kicked into touch without landing on the playing area, and without touching a player or the referee.

‘The 22’ is the area between the goal-line and the 22-metre line, including the 22-metre line *but excluding the goal-line*.

The line of touch is an imaginary line in the field of play at right angles to the touch-line through the place where the ball is thrown in.

The ball is in touch when it is not being carried by a player and it touches the touch-line or anything or anyone on or beyond the touch-line.

The ball is in touch when a player is carrying it and the ball-carrier (or the ball) touches the touch-line or the ground beyond the touch-line.

The place where the ball-carrier (or the ball) touched or crossed the touch-line is where it went into touch.

The ball is in touch if a player catches the ball and that player has a foot on the touch-line or the ground beyond the touch-line.

If a player has one foot in the field of play and one foot in touch and holds the ball, the ball is in touch.

If the ball crosses the touch-line or touch-in-goal line, and is caught by a player who has both feet in the playing area, the ball is not in touch or touch-in-goal. Such a player may knock the ball into the playing area. If a player jumps and catches the ball, both feet must land in the playing area otherwise the ball is in touch or touch-in-goal.

A player in touch may kick or knock the ball, but not hold it, provided it has not crossed the plane of the touch-line. The plane of the touch-line is the vertical space rising immediately above the touch-line.

19.1 THROW-IN

NO GAIN IN GROUND

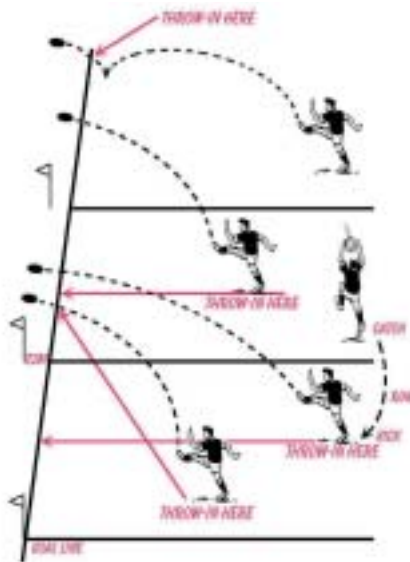
- (a) **Outside a team's 22, a team member kicks directly into touch.** Except for a penalty kick, when a player anywhere in the field of play who is outside the 22 kicks directly into touch, there is no gain in ground. The throw-in is taken either at the place opposite where the player kicked the ball, or at the place where it went into touch, whichever is nearer that player's goal-line.
- (b) **Player takes ball into that team's 22.** When a defending player gets the ball outside the 22, takes or puts it inside the 22, and then kicks directly into touch, there is no gain in ground.

GAIN IN GROUND

- (c) **Player inside that team's 22.** When a defending player gets the ball inside the 22, or that player's in-goal and kicks into touch, the throw-in is where the ball went into touch.
- (d) **Kicks indirectly into touch.** When a player anywhere in the playing area kicks indirectly into touch so that the ball bounces in the field of play the throw-in is taken where the ball went into touch.

When a player anywhere in the playing area kicks the ball so that it touches or is touched by an opposition player and then goes indirectly into touch so that the ball bounces in the field of play the throw-in is taken where the ball went into touch.

When a player anywhere in the playing area kicks the ball so that it touches or is touched by an opposition player and then goes directly into touch the throw-in is taken in line with where the opposition player touched the ball or where the ball crossed the touch-line if that is nearer the opposition player's goal-line.



TOUCH & THROW-IN

PENALTY KICK

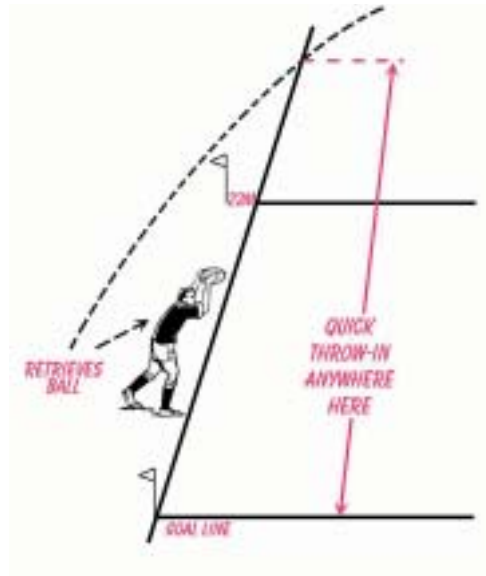
- (e) **Penalty kick.** When a player kicks to touch from a penalty kick anywhere in the playing area, the throw-in is taken where the ball went into touch.

FREE KICK

- (f) **Outside the kicker's 22, no gain in ground.** When a free kick awarded outside the 22 goes directly into touch, the throw-in is in line with where the ball was kicked, or where it went into touch, whichever is nearer the kicker's goal-line.
- (g) **Inside the kicker's 22 or in-goal, gain in ground.** When a free kick is awarded in the 22 or in-goal and the kick goes directly into touch, the throw-in is where the ball went into touch.

19.2 QUICK THROW-IN

- (a) A player may take a quick throw-in without waiting for a line-out to form.
- (b) For a quick throw-in, the player may be anywhere outside the field of play between the place where the ball went into touch and the player's goal-line.



QUICK THROW-IN

- (c) A player must not take a quick throw-in after the line-out has formed. If the player does, the quick throw-in is disallowed. The same team throws in at the line-out.
- (d) For a quick throw-in, the player must use the ball that went into touch. If, after it went to touch and was made dead, another ball is used, or if another person has touched the ball apart from the player throwing it in, then the quick throw-in is disallowed. The same team throws in at the line-out.
- (e) At a quick throw-in, if the player does not throw the ball in straight so that it travels at least 5 metres along the line of touch before it touches the ground or a player, or if the player steps into the field of play when the

ball is thrown, then the quick throw-in is disallowed. The opposing team chooses to throw-in at either a line-out where the quick throw-in was attempted, or a scrum on the 15-metre line at that place. If they too throw-in the ball incorrectly at the line-out, a scrum is formed on the 15-metre line. The team that first threw in the ball throws in the ball at the scrum.

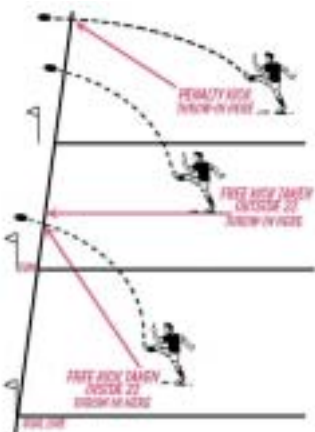
- (f) At a quick throw-in, a player may come to the line of touch and leave without being penalised.
- (g) At a quick throw-in, a player must not prevent the ball being thrown in 5 metres.
Penalty: Free Kick on 15-metre line
- (h) If a player carrying the ball is forced into touch, that player must release the ball to an opposition player so that there can be a quick throw-in.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on 15-metre line

19.3 OTHER THROW-INS

On all other occasions, the throw-in is taken where the ball went into touch.

19.4 WHO THROWS-IN

The throw-in is taken by an opponent of the player who last held or touched the ball before it went into touch. When there is doubt, the attacking team takes the throw-in.



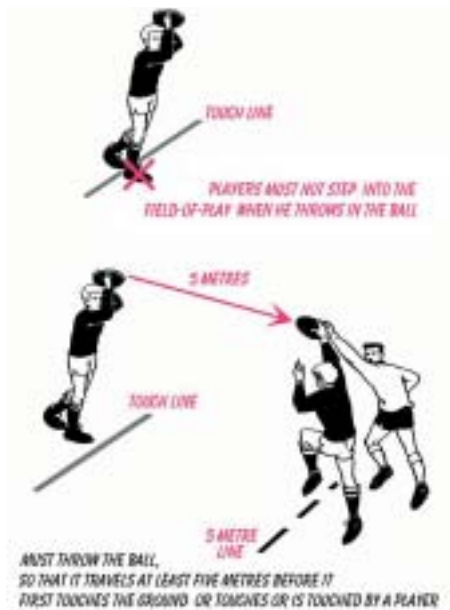
TOUCH & THROW-IN

Exception

When a team takes a penalty kick, and the ball is kicked into touch, the throw-in is taken by a player of the team that took the penalty kick. This applies whether the ball was kicked directly or indirectly into touch.

19.5 HOW THE THROW-IN IS TAKEN

The player taking the throw-in must stand at the correct place. The player must not step into the field of play when the ball is thrown. The ball must be thrown straight, so that it travels at least 5 metres along the line of touch before it first touches the ground or touches or is touched by a player.



HOW THE THROW-IN TAKES PLACE

19.6 INCORRECT THROW-IN

- (a) If the throw-in at a line-out is incorrect, the opposing team has the choice of throwing in at a line-out or a scrum on the 15-metre line. If they choose the throw-in to the line-out and it is again incorrect, a scrum is formed. The team that took the first throw-in throws in the ball.

- (b) The throw-in at the line-out must be taken without delay and without pretending to throw.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (c) A player must not intentionally or repeatedly throw the ball in not straight.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line

LINE-OUT

DEFINITIONS

The purpose of the line-out is to restart play, quickly, safely and fairly, after the ball has gone into touch, with a throw-in between two lines of players.

Line-out players. Line-out players are the players who form the two lines that make a line-out.

Receiver. The receiver is the player in position to catch the ball when line-out players pass or knock the ball back from the line-out. Any player may be the receiver but each team may have only one receiver at a line-out.

Players taking part in the line-out known as participating players. Players taking part in the line-out are the player who throws-in and an immediate opponent, the two players waiting to receive the ball from the line-out and the line-out players.

All other players. All other players who are not taking part in the line-out must be at least 10 metres behind the line of touch, on or behind their goal-line if that is nearer, until the line-out ends.

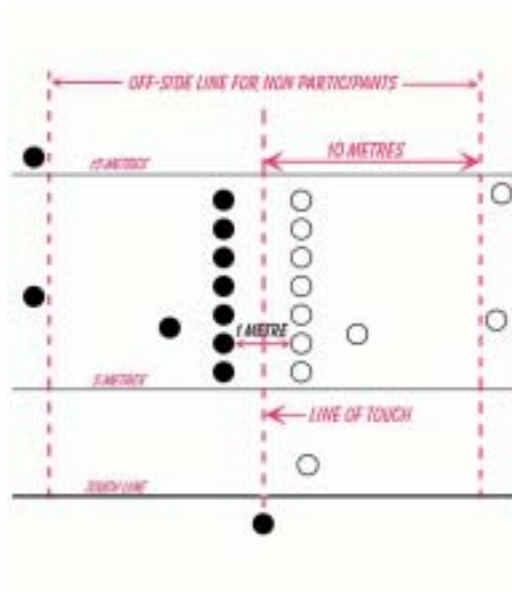
15-metre line. The 15-metre line is 15 metres in-field and parallel with the touch-line.

Scrum after line-out. Any scrum ordered because of an infringement or stoppage at the line-out is on the 15-metre line on the line of touch

19.7 FORMING A LINE-OUT

- (a) **Minimum.** At least two players from each team must form a line-out.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (b) **Maximum.** The team throwing in the ball decides the maximum number of players in the line-out.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (c) The opposing team may have fewer line-out players but they must not have more.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line

- (d) When the ball is in touch, every player who approaches the line of touch is presumed to do so to form a line-out. Players who approach the line of touch must do so without delay. Players of either team must not leave the line-out once they have taken up a position in the line-out until the line-out has ended.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (e) If the team throwing in the ball put fewer than the usual number of players in the line-out, their opponents must be given a reasonable time to move enough players out of the line-out to satisfy this Law.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (f) These players must leave the line-out without delay. They must move to the off-side line, 10 metres behind the line of touch. If the line-out ends before they reach this line, they may rejoin play.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (g) **Failure to form a line-out.** A team must not voluntarily fail to form a line-out.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (h) **Where the line-out players must stand.** The front of the line-out is not less than 5 metres from the touch-line. The back of the line-out is not more than 15 metres from the touch-line. All line-out players must stand between these two points.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (i) **Two single straight lines.** The line-out players of both teams form two single parallel lines each at right angles to the touch-line.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (j) Opposing players forming a line-out must keep a clear space between their inside shoulders. This space is determined when players are in an upright stance.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (k) **Metre gap.** Each line of players must be half a metre on their side of the line of touch.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (l) The line of touch must not be within 5 metres of the goal-line.



THE LINE-OUT

- (m) After the line-out has formed, but before the ball has been thrown in, a player must not hold, push, charge into, or obstruct an opponent.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line

19.8 BEGINNING AND ENDING A LINE-OUT

- (a) **Line-out begins.** The line-out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in.
- (b) **Line-out ends.** The line-out ends when the ball or a player carrying it leaves the line-out.

This includes the following:

When the ball is thrown, knocked or kicked out of the line-out, the line-out ends.

When the ball or a player carrying the ball moves into the area between the 5-metre line and the touch-line, the line-out ends.

When a line-out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling off, the line-out ends.

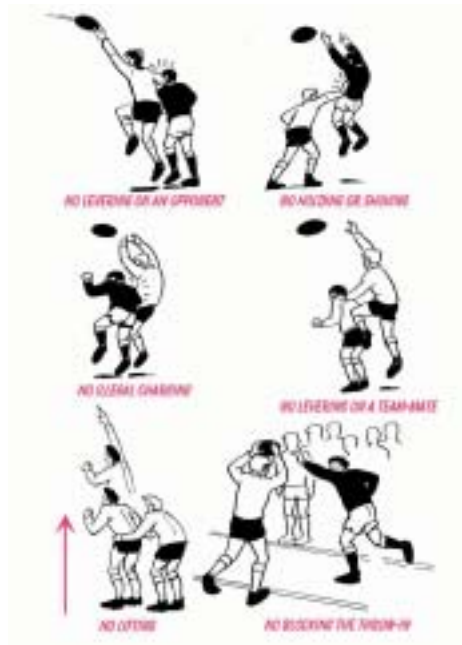
When the ball is thrown beyond the 15-metre line, or when a player takes or puts it beyond that line, the line-out ends.

When a ruck or maul develops in a line-out, and all the feet of all the players in the ruck or maul move beyond the line of touch, the line-out ends.

When the ball becomes unplayable in a line-out, the line-out ends. Play restarts with a scrum.

19.9 OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN A LINE-OUT

- (a) **Off-side.** A line-out player must not be off-side. The off-side line runs through the line of touch until the ball is thrown in. After the ball has touched a player or the ground, the off-side line is a line through the ball.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (b) Players jumping for the ball may take a step in any direction providing they do not step across the line of touch.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (c) **Levering on an opponent.** A line-out player must not use an opponent as a support when jumping.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (d) **Holding or shoving.** A line-out player must not hold, push, charge, obstruct or grasp an opponent not holding the ball except when a ruck or maul is taking place.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (e) **Illegal charging.** A line-out player must not charge an opponent except in an attempt to tackle the opponent or to play the ball.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (f) **Levering on a team-mate.** A jumping line-out player must not use a team-mate as a support to jump.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line



- (g) **Lifting.** A line-out player must not lift a team-mate.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (h) **Support before jumping.** A player must not support a team-mate before the team-mate has jumped.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (i) **Jumping or supporting before the ball is thrown.** A player must not jump for the ball or support any player before the ball has left the hands of the player throwing it in.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (j) **Pre-grip below the waist.** A player must not pre-grip any team-mate below the waist.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15 metre line
- (k) **Support of a player.** A player must not support a jumping team-mate below the shorts from behind or below the thighs from the front.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15 metre line

- (l) **Lowering a Player.** Players who support a jumping team-mate must lower that player to the ground as soon as the ball has been won by a player of either team.
Penalty: Free-Kick on the 15 metre line
- (m) **Blocking the throw-in.** A line-out player must not stand less than 5 metres from the touch-line. A line-out player must not prevent the ball being thrown in 5 metres.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (n) When the ball has been thrown beyond a player in the line-out, that player may move to the space between the touch-line and the 5-metre line. If the player moves into that space the player must not move towards that player's goal-line before the line-out ends, except in a peeling off movement.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line
- (o) **Catching or deflecting.** When jumping for the ball, a player must use either both hands or the inside arm to try to catch or deflect the ball. The jumper must not use the outside arm alone to try to catch or deflect the ball.
If the jumper has both hands above the head either hand may be used to play the ball.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line

19.10 OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO PLAYERS NOT IN THE LINE-OUT

In general, a player not taking part in a line-out must stay at least 10 metres behind the line of touch, or on or behind that player's goal-line if that is nearer, until the line-out ends.

There are two exceptions to this:

Exception 1: Long throw-in. If the player who is throwing in throws the ball beyond the 15-metre line, a player of the same team may run forward to take the ball. If that player does so, an opponent may also run forward.

Penalty: Penalty Kick on the offending team's off-side line, opposite the place of infringement but not less than 15 metres from the touch-line.

Exception 2: The receiver may run into the gap and perform any of the actions available to any other player in the line-out. The receiver is liable to penalty for offences in the line-out as would be other players in the line-out.

19.11 PEELING OFF

DEFINITION

A line-out player ‘peels off’ when leaving the line-out to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team-mate.

- (a) **When:** A player must not peel off until the ball has left the hands of the player throwing it in.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line, in line with the line of touch.
- (b) A player who peels off, must stay within the area from that players’ line of touch to 10 metres from the line of touch, and must keep moving until the line-out has ended.
Penalty: Free Kick on the 15-metre line, in line with the line of touch.
- (c) Players may change their positions in the line-out before the ball is thrown in.

19.12 OFF-SIDE AT THE LINE-OUT

- (a) When a line-out forms, there are two separate off-side lines, parallel to the goal-lines, for the teams.
- (b) **Participating players.** One off-side line applies to the players taking part in the line-out (usually some or all of the forwards, plus the scrum-half and the player throwing in). Until the ball is thrown in, and has touched a player or the ground, this off-side line is the line of touch. After that, the off-side line is a line through the ball.
- (c) **Players not taking part.** The other off-side line applies to the players not taking part in the line-out (usually the backs). For them, the off-side line is 10 metres behind the line of touch or their goal-line, if that is nearer.

The line-out off-side Law is different in the case of a long throw-in, or in the case of a ruck or maul in the line-out.

19.13 OFF-SIDE WHEN TAKING PART IN THE LINE-OUT

- (a) **Before the ball has touched a player or the ground.** A player must not overstep the line of touch. A player is off-side, if, before the ball has touched a player or the ground, that player oversteps the line of touch, unless doing so while jumping for the ball. The player must jump from that player's side of the line of touch.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (b) If a player jumps and crosses the line of touch but fails to catch the ball, that player is not penalised provided that player gets back on-side without delay.
- (c) **After the ball has touched a player or the ground.** A player not carrying the ball is off-side if, after the ball has touched a player or the ground, that player steps in front of the ball, unless tackling (or trying to tackle) an opponent. Any attempt to tackle must start from that player's side of the ball.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (d) The referee must penalise any player who, intentionally or not, moves into an off-side position without trying to win possession or tackle an opponent.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (e) No player of either team participating in the line-out may leave the line-out until it has ended.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line

19.14 PLAYER THROWING-IN

There are four options available to the player throwing in (and the thrower's immediate opponent):

- (a) The thrower may stay within 5 metres of the touch-line.
- (b) The thrower may retire to the off-side line 10 metres behind the line of touch.
- (c) The thrower may join the line-out as soon as the ball has been thrown in.
- (d) The thrower may move into the receiver position if that position is empty. If the thrower goes anywhere else, the thrower is off-side.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line

19.15 OFF-SIDE WHEN NOT TAKING PART IN THE LINE-OUT

- (a) **Before the line-out has ended.** The off-side line is 10 metres behind the line of touch, or the player's goal-line, whichever is nearer.

A player who is not taking part in the line-out is offside if that player oversteps the off-side line before the line-out has ended.

Penalty: Penalty Kick on the offending team's off-side line opposite the place of infringement, at least 15 metres from the touch-line.

- (b) **Players not yet on-side when the ball is thrown in.** A player may throw-in the ball even if a team-mate has not yet reached the off-side line. However, if this player is not trying to reach an on-side position without delay, this player is off-side.

Penalty: Penalty Kick on the offending team's off-side line opposite the place of infringement, at least 15 metres from the touch-line

Exception: Long throw-in. There is an exception to the Law of off-side at the line-out. It applies if the ball is thrown beyond the 15-metre line. As soon as the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing in, any players of the thrower's team may run for the ball.

This means that a player taking part in the line-out may run infield beyond the 15-metre line, and a player not taking part in the line-out may run forward across the off-side line.

If this happens, an opponent may also run infield or run forward.

However, if a player runs infield or runs forward to take a long throw-in, and the ball is not thrown beyond the 15-metre line, this player is off-side and must be penalised.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

For players taking part in the line-out: penalty kick is on the 15-metre line.

For players not taking part in the line-out: penalty kick is on the offending team's off-side line at the place of infringement, at least 15 metres from the touch-line.

19.16 OFF-SIDE AT RUCKS OR MAULS IN THE LINE-OUT

- (a) When a ruck or a maul develops in a line-out the off-side line for a player taking part in the line-out no longer runs through the ball. The off-side line is now the hindmost foot of that player's team in the ruck or maul.
- (b) However, for players not taking part in the line-out, the off-side line is still 10 metres behind the line of touch. For these players, the line-out does not end when a ruck or maul develops.
- (c) It ends when the ruck or maul leaves the line of touch. For this to happen, all the feet of all the players in the ruck or maul must have left the line of touch.
- (d) A player taking part in the line-out must either join the ruck or maul, or retire to the off-side line and stay at that line, Otherwise that player is off-side.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line
- (e) The rest of the Law of ruck or maul applies. A player must not join the ruck or maul from the opponents' side.
Penalty: Penalty Kick

Players must not join it in front of the off-side line. If they do, they are off-side.

Penalty: Penalty Kick on the 15-metre line

- (f) **Players not taking part in the line-out.** When a ruck or maul develops in a line-out, the line-out has not ended until all the feet of all the players in the ruck or maul have moved beyond the line of touch.

Until then, the off-side line for players not taking part in the line-out is still 10 metres behind the line of touch, or the goal-line if that is nearer. A player who oversteps this off-side line is off-side.

Penalty: Penalty Kick on the off-side line at least 15 metres from the touch-line