

Law 8

The Start and Restart of Play

A kick-off starts both halves of a match, both halves of extra time and restarts play after a goal has been scored. Free kicks (direct or indirect), penalty kicks, throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks are other restarts (see Laws 13–17). A dropped ball is the restart when the referee stops play and the Law does not require one of the above restarts.

If an offence occurs when the ball is not in play, this does not change how play is restarted.

1. Kick-off Procedure

- the referee tosses a coin and the team that wins the toss decides which goal to attack in the first half or to take the kick-off
- depending on the above, their opponents take the kick-off or decide which goal to attack in the first half
- the team that decided which goal to attack in the first half takes the kick-off to start the second half
- for the second half, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals
- after a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by their opponents

For every kick-off:

- all players, except the player taking the kick-off, must be in their own half of the field of play
- the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball until it is in play
- the ball must be stationary on the centre mark
- the referee gives a signal
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves

- a goal may be scored directly against the opponents from the kick-off; if the ball directly enters the kicker's goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opponents

Offences and sanctions

If the player taking the kick-off touches the ball again before it has touched another player, an indirect free kick, or for a handball offence, a direct free kick, is awarded.

In the event of any other kick-off procedure offence, the kick-off is retaken.

2. Dropped ball

Procedure

- If, when play was stopped:
 - the ball was inside the penalty area, the referee drops it for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area
 - the ball was outside the penalty area, the referee drops it for one player of the team that has or would have gained possession if this can be determined by the referee; otherwise, it is dropped for one player of the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped
- All other players (of both teams) must remain at least 4 m (4.5 yds) from the ball until it is in play

The ball is in play when it touches the ground.

Offences and sanctions

The ball is dropped again if it:

- touches a player before it touches the ground
- leaves the field of play after it touches the ground, without touching a player

If a dropped ball enters the goal without touching at least two players, play is restarted with:

- a goal kick if it enters the opponents' goal
- a corner kick if it enters the team's goal

