

LAW 11- OFFSIDE-

Along with handling the ball, the offside rule is one of the most controversial and most misunderstood Laws of the game. No other call or perceived missed call heats up emotions on the sidelines like the offside. Here is a quick overview of FIFA Law 11.

1. **WHAT IS AN OFFSIDE POSITION ?-** A player is in the offside position if:
 - a. The player is in the opponents' half of the field, and...
 - b. The player is closer to goal line than BOTH the ball and two players (2nd to last defender) from the other team.
2. **OFFSIDE POSITION IS NOT ILLEGAL-** Any player can be in an offside position without breaking any rules, because it is not an offense in itself to be in an offside position. This is often forgotten
3. **WHEN DOES THE REFEREE DETERMINE IF THE OFFSIDE PLAYER IS ILLEGAL?** The referee will determine if the player in the offside position is guilty of infringement at the moment the ball is played or touched by one of his or her teammates. If or where the player receives the ball or where the ball lands has nothing to do with the judgment call. The judgment is made the moment the ball is played or touched by a teammate and then 3 questions will be asked...
4. **WHAT DOES THE PLAYER HAVE TO DO TO BE CALLED OFFSIDE?-** To be guilty of offside the player in the offside position **MUST** do one of the following:
 - a. Interfere with play. This could be receiving the ball, running to receive the ball, deflecting the ball, shooting, passing or attempting to kick the ball, etc. The offside player does not have to touch the ball to interfere with play.
 - b. Interfere with an opponent. To interfere with an opponent does not require a touch on the ball or the opponent. The player in the offside position may block the vision of an opponent obstruct or impede their progress to the ball and therefore to some degree interferes or distracts the opponent.
 - c. Gain an advantage by being in that offside position- Ask this simple question, did the team of the player in the offside position gain an advantage by that player being in that position? This situation often occurs during deflections and rebounds around the goal.
 - d. EXCEPTIONS TO THE OFFSIDE POSITION- A player in an offside position can **NEVER** be guilty of offside infringement under certain situations. If a player in an offside position receives a ball DIRECTLY from one of the following situations then refs should swallow the whistle. Once the ball touches a teammate from one of these 3 conditions then those conditions no longer exist and offside infringement will be judged.
 - i. Throw in
 - ii. Goal Kick
 - iii. Corner Kick
5. **HOW DOES THE REFEREE CALL OFFSIDE?** Once the assistant referee (side ref) feels the criterion above has been met he or she will signal by raising the flag straight in the air. Once the center ref acknowledges this call and blows the whistle the assistant referee will use the flag to point to the location of the offside player. The defending team will be awarded an indirect free kick from this spot.
6. **INTERESTING FACTS-**
 - a. A player in an offside position can go far away from the play or temporarily leave the field to indicate to the referee that they are not interfering with play or with an opponent or gaining advantage from their position. This allows the team to continue the attack without penalty.
 - b. Referees are taught that if the call is in doubt hold the whistle and give offense the benefit.
 - c. One fact that is often forgotten is that you cannot be offside if you are even with or behind the ball. You cannot dribble to offside position.
 - d. If your teammate dribbles past all 10 opponents and has only the keeper to beat, you can run even with the ball and receive a pass even though there are not two defenders between you and the goal line, **WHY-** you were even with the ball.
 - e. Many teams that aggressively attack will constantly push the offside line as a tactic. Since they are so close to infringement the aggressive attacking team receives many offside calls against them.

WORLD CUP EXAMPLES:

 - i. Thierry Henry of France and Arsenal and one of the best attackers in the world had 18 offside infringements against him in 7 World cup matches.
 - ii. Ronaldo of Brazil and Real Madrid and multiple FIFA player of the year and all time leading World Cup scorer had 10 offside infringements against him in 5 World cup matches
 - iii. Italy the **WORLD CUP Champs** had 34 offside calls in 7 matches. That was the highest in the **WORLD**. That's nearly 5 a game for the champs.
 - iv. France the **WORLD CUP runner up** had 29 offside calls in 7 matches. That was second highest in the **WORLD** for the 2nd place team. There seems to be a trend among the top teams, can you figure what it is?