



Fouls Recognition

Before you can recognise a foul, you need to define what a foul is. FIFA defines a foul as one of the 10 direct free kick fouls or 8 indirect free kick fouls “against an opponent who is a player (except handling), on the field of play, while the ball is in play.”

- **Work and Move.** To be able to recognize a foul, you have to be able to see it. To see it, you have to move and work hard. Most importantly, do not grow roots! Even if the game is slow or easy or does not require you to move much, always keep moving. This can be a walk, jog, or backpedal. Stopping leads to trying to look around or over players.
- **Make the Easy Calls.** Do not over think things. Relax and call the easy fouls that the players give you. If there is a simple trip in the middle of the pitch, call it. This will get you into the match and will increase your game control. If you think about a play too long before deciding, the opportunity to decide is gone.
- **Go Where the Ball is Going, not Where it is.** The referee needs to be moving to where the ball will be next and not get stuck watching where it is now. A referee has to understand the options that are available to the player and predict where play will be. Over time, your ability to read play and predict where the ball is going will improve. Watch. Learn. Be flexible and understand the options.
- **Look Through Play to Your AR.** A Referee, who does not know where to go and is trying to cover every part of the field or in the middle of the passing lanes or missing critical decision points, is a referee who does not understand that by keeping the play between you and your AR will usually keep you positioned to see play and fouls. This position will tell you when to be wide and when to be tight to play. You will not only be at a good angle to see the play and/or foul, you will be able to capitalize on the help of your Assistant Referees.
- **Find the Right Focus Point.** What part of the players are you watching during a match? Most inexperienced referees tend to watch player's feet. A better place to start is about mid-thigh. If there is more activity around the shoulders and chest, then move your focus point a bit higher to catch these fouls in your peripheral vision. If there is more activity at the calves, thighs and waist move your focal point a bit lower to catch this action.

Foul Selection. There are probably a thousand fouls in 90 minutes of a soccer game. If the referee called every foul that occurred, the players and fans would not enjoy the match and the game would stall to a crawl, lacking tempo and rhythm – no longer The Beautiful Game. The art of refereeing starts with learning to select the fouls to call and not to call.

- **Trifling Fouls.** Constant whistling of trifling fouls will destroy the flow of the game and generate frustration in the players, coaches, and fans. Fouls that do not have an impact on the ability of a player to play the ball should not be called. They are fouls and it is important to recognize that they are fouls but not important enough to stop play. If not calling the foul has a negative impact on your ability to officiate the match or undermines your authority as the referee, they are not trifling and warrant the stoppage.
- **Use of Advantage.** Advantage is an advanced skill that tells everyone that you saw a foul but have decided that calling the foul would be more damaging to the fouled team than not calling the foul. Too many referees invoke advantage in their mind and seldom make it public with a sweeping gesture with the arms and a boisterous “Play on” or “Advantage”. If you do not let the players around you know that it is an advantage decision, how can they know that you recognized it and gave them the opportunity to play the ball. In their mind, you may appear unaware and they just got lucky.



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- **Feel the Heat.** An effective referee can sense when a game is turning from a friendly night in the park to a tempest in a teapot. Look into a player's eyes. Read their body language. Listen to the tension, volume, and intensity of their voice. If the pulse of the game increases, your effort should increase with it. If the game begins to come to a boil, tighten your foul selection. If the game cools, loosen your foul selection. Remember as tempers flare, you have to remain under control and bring calm to the match.

Foul Severity. Once you have mastered recognizing and selecting fouls, the final step is to define the severity of the foul. The indirect free kick fouls are seldom a major issue since they do not typically involve contact or violence. However, seven of the ten Direct Free Kick fouls need to be defined as careless, reckless, or using excessive force.

The referee needs to consider the following factors when identifying a Foul and its severity.

Remember – 'DO A SCIP'

D = Danger / Safety / Aggression / Intensity / Force to opponent

O = Opportunity to play the ball fairly

A = Atmosphere of the Match (Understanding what's at stake / the teams involved)

S = Speed – Attacker and Defender

C = Careless, Reckless or Excessive Force

I = Intent – What were the intentions of the offender? / Identifying Body Language

P = Position of the tackler (Front, Side, Behind)

Refereeing a soccer game and calling fouls is not a black-and-white affair, there is a lot of grey areas. It takes experience, skill, and education to effectively referee a game. Seek the advice of a mentor, assessor, instructor or experienced referee. Most importantly develop a sense of how the game is played and how it meshes or conflicts with the Laws of the Game.

Advantage

When considering the application of advantage, the following principle is provided as a guideline for officials. Remember, advantage application may differ depending upon the skill level and general atmosphere of the game.

The "4 P Principle" of Advantage Application:

1. **Possession of ball:** control by team or player.
2. **Potential for attack:** ability to continue a credible and dangerous attack.
3. **Personnel:** skill of attackers, numerical advantage.
4. **Proximity to opponent's goal:** closeness to goal.