



# ABOUT THE LAWS

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## Philosophy and Spirit

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Football is the greatest sport on earth. It is played on every continent, in every country and at many different levels. The fact that the Laws of the Game are the same for all football throughout the world, from the FIFA World Cup™ through to a game between young children in a remote village, is a considerable strength which must continue to be harnessed for the good of football everywhere.

Football must have Laws which keep the game fair – this is a crucial foundation of the ‘beautiful game’ and a vital feature of the ‘spirit’ of the game. The best matches are those where the referee is rarely needed because the players play with respect for each other, the match officials and the Laws.

Football’s Laws are relatively simple compared to most other team sports, but as many situations are subjective and match officials are human, some decisions will inevitably be wrong or cause debate and discussion. For some people, this discussion is part of the game’s enjoyment and attraction but, whether decisions are right or wrong, the ‘spirit’ of the game requires that referees’ decisions must always be respected. All those in authority, especially coaches and team captains, have a clear responsibility to the game to respect the match officials and their decisions.

The Laws cannot deal with every possible situation, so where there is no direct provision in the Laws, The IFAB expects the referee to make a decision within the ‘spirit’ of the game

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# WHAT WOULD FOOTBALL WANT?

The Laws must also contribute to the safety and welfare of players. In recent years, player welfare has been the driving force behind a number of changes such as the possibility of allowing an additional substitute in extra time and the introduction of 'drinks' and 'cooling' breaks.

Additionally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a temporary amendment to Law 3 has been introduced to give top competitions the option of increasing the maximum number of substitutions from three to five. Trials have also started with additional 'concussion substitutes' so that teams can prioritise the welfare of a player who has an actual or suspected concussion without suffering a numerical disadvantage.

Accidents inevitably occur, but the Laws aim to help make the game as safe as possible, balancing player welfare and sporting fairness. This requires referees to use the Laws to deal strongly with those players whose actions are too aggressive or dangerous. The Laws embody the unacceptability of unsafe play in their disciplinary phrases, such as 'reckless challenge' and 'endangering the safety of an opponent' or 'using excessive force'.

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## Managing Changes

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Football must remain attractive and enjoyable for players, match officials and coaches, as well as spectators, fans and administrators, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability.

Therefore, for a Law to be changed, The IFAB and all its bodies that are involved in the decision-making process must be convinced that the change will benefit the game; this sometimes means that the potential change needs to be tested.

For every proposed change, the focus is on fairness, integrity, respect, safety, the

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The IFAB will continue to engage with the global football community so changes to the Laws benefit football at all levels and in every corner of the world, and so the integrity of the game, the Laws and the match officials is respected, valued and protected.

FAIRNESS, INTEGRITY,  
RESPECT, SAFETY, ENJOYMENT  
& TECHNOLOGY

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## The Future

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During 2021 and 2022, The IFAB will continue to work with its advisory panels and consult widely, with a special focus on player welfare in light of the pandemic and feedback from the 'concussion substitute' trial.

The IFAB greatly enjoys engaging with people throughout the world and we are always very pleased to receive suggestions or questions relating to the Laws of the Game. Indeed, many recent Law changes have originated from suggestions from people from many different parts of the world.

Please continue to send your suggestions, ideas and questions to:

**lawenquiries@thefab.com.**

The IFAB will continue to engage with the global football family to ensure that changes to the Laws benefit football at all levels and in every corner of the world.

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