

**U.S. Soccer Federation Referee Program**  
**Report Codes for Cautionable and Sending-Off Offenses**  
**Based on IFAB's 2020-21 Laws of the Game (LOTG)**



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**Cautionable Offenses**

A player is cautioned and shown a yellow card for committing any of the following cautionable offenses:

1. Unsporting behavior (**UB**)
  - a. Commits a direct free kick offense in a reckless manner whether within playing distance or not
  - b. Commits a foul which interferes with or impedes an opposing team's promising attack, except where the referee awards a PK for the offence that was an attempt to play the ball
  - c. Handles the ball to interfere with or stops a promising attack
  - d. Denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by an offense which was an attempt to play the ball and the referee awards a penalty kick
  - e. Handles the ball in an attempt to score a goal (whether or not the attempt is successful) or in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a goal
  - f. Plays the ball when leaving the field of play after being given permission to leave
  - g. Commits an act that in the opinion of the referee shows a lack of respect for the game
  - h. Attempts to deceive the referee e.g. by faking an injury or by pretending to have been fouled (simulation)
  - i. Verbally distracts an opponent during play or at a restart
  - j. Unfairly distracts or impedes an opponent performing a throw-in (including moving closer than 2 yards to where the throw-in is to be taken)
  - k. Changes places (jerseys) with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission (caution both players at the next stoppage)
  - l. Engages in trickery to circumvent the goalkeeper's limitation on handling the ball played from a teammate's foot (the defender who initiates the "trickery" is cautioned, the decision does not require that the goalkeeper actually handles the ball, and the misconduct can occur during dynamic play or at a restart)
  - m. Makes unauthorized marks on the field
  - n. Refuses to leave the field due to injury after the referee authorized the doctors or stretcher bearers to enter the field of play, or due to illegal equipment, bleeding, or blood on the uniform
  - o. Throws an object (or the ball) in a reckless manner
  - p. Celebrates a goal by:
    - i. climbing onto a perimeter fence and/or approaching the spectators in a manner which causes safety and/or security issues
    - ii. gesturing or acting in a provocative, derisory, or inflammatory way
    - iii. covering the head or face with a mask or similar device
    - iv. removing the shirt or covering the head with the shirt
  - q. Commits an offense described in Law 14 - The Penalty Kick (during the match, extra time, or kicks from the penalty mark) for which the referee must caution a player(s):
    - i. the kicker feints to kick the ball once the run-up to the ball has been completed
    - ii. the goalkeeper offends and the ball does not enter the goal
    - iii. both the kicker and goalkeeper commit an offense at the same time and the kick is missed or saved (kick is retaken)
    - iv. the kicker when both the kicker and goalkeeper commit an offense at the same time and the kick is scored (goal is disallowed)

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2. Dissent by word or action (**DT**)
  - a. Verbally or through action disputes or shows contempt for an official's decision
  - b. If playing as a goalkeeper, leaves the penalty area (not beckoned by the referee) to engage an official in debate regarding a decision
3. Persistent offenses (**PO**)
  - a. Repeatedly commits fouls (Law 12) against one or more opponents (the offside offense in Law 11 is not considered)
    - i. No specific number or pattern of fouls constitutes "repeatedly"
    - ii. "Repeatedly" does not require the offenses to be the same type of foul
4. Delaying the restart of play (**DR**)
  - a. Appears to take a throw-in but after excessive time leaves it to a team-mate to take
  - b. Delays leaving the field of play when being substituted
  - c. Excessively delays a restart
  - d. Kicks or carries the ball away, refuses to release possession of the ball, or provokes a confrontation by deliberately touching the ball after the referee has stopped play for a restart by the opposing team
  - e. Takes a free kick from the wrong position to force a retake
  - f. Deliberately prevents a free kick being taken quickly
5. Failure to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick, or throw-in (**FRD**)
  - a. Does not retire at least ten yards away from an opponent's free kick
  - b. Does not retire at least ten yards away from an opponent's corner kick
  - c. Does not retire at least two yards away from an opponent's throw-in
6. Entering, re-entering, or deliberately leaving the field without the referee's permission (**ERL**)
  - a. Re-entering after having previously been
    - i. instructed to leave the field to correct equipment
    - ii. given permission by the referee to leave the field due to an injury
    - iii. instructed to leave the field due to bleeding or blood on the uniform
  - b. Re-entering and gaining an advantage after having previously left the field to avoid being involved in active play (to avoid committing an offside offense)
  - c. Leaving the field while a defender to place an opponent in an apparent offside position  
[NOTE: Except for the above actions, leaving or re-entering the field is not an offense if, in the opinion of the referee, it was done in the normal course of play]
7. Entering the referee review area (**ERA**) - applicable in competitions where the use of Video Assistant Referees (VARs) has been approved (written permission by IFAB and FIFA)
8. Excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal (**ERS**)

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A substitute or substituted player is cautioned if guilty of committing any of the following offenses:

1. Unsporting behavior (**UB**)
2. Dissent by word or action (**DT**)
3. Delaying the restart of play (**DR**)
4. Entering or re-entering the field of play without the referee's permission (**ERL**)
5. Entering the referee review area (**ERA**)
6. Excessively using the 'review' (TV screen) signal (**ERS**)

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## **Sending-off Offenses**

A player, substitute, or substituted player is sent-off (shown a red card) for committing any of the following offenses:

1. Serious foul play (**SFP**)
  - a. Commits a tackle or challenge that endangers the safety of an opponent or uses excessive force or brutality
  - b. Lunges at an opponent in challenging for the ball from the front, from the side, or from behind using excessive force or endangers the safety of the opponent
2. Violent conduct (**VC**)
  - a. Uses or attempts to use excessive force or brutality against an opponent when not challenging for the ball, or against a teammate, match official, spectator, or any other person, regardless of whether contact is made
  - b. When not challenging for the ball deliberately strikes an opponent or any other person on the head or face with the hand or arm, unless the force used was negligible
  - c. Throws an object (or the ball) using excessive force
3. Spitting at or biting an opponent or any other person (**SB**)
4. Denying the opposing team, a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO) by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to the goalkeeper within his or her own penalty area) (**DGH**)
  - DOGSO by deliberate handling offense wherever the offense occurs (outside or inside the penalty area)
5. Denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent whose overall movement is towards the offender's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick (**DGF**)
  - DOGSO by an offense within the offender's penalty area, for which the referee awards a penalty kick, and the offense was NOT an attempt to play the ball (e.g. holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball, etc.)
  - The following must be considered:
    - distance between the offense and the goal
    - general direction of play (if player moves diagonally to pass the last defender or goalkeeper, this can still be a DOGSO)
    - likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball
    - location and number of defenders
6. Using offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or gestures (**AL**)
7. Receiving a second caution in the same match (**2CT**)
8. Entering the video operation room (**EOR**) - applicable in competitions where the use of Video Assistant Referees (VARs) has been approved (written permission by IFAB and FIFA)