Information for New Referees 2010

United States Soccer Federation

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Information for New Referees

Welcome to the U.S. Soccer Referee Community

You've been through the entry level class, completed all the requirements, and have your badge. Now what? The class you took taught you a lot about the Laws of the Game and the mechanics of refereeing, but there are still probably many questions you might have about being a referee.

Based on feedback from thousands of new referees just like you and with the help of more experienced referees who have been where you are now, this booklet has been put together as a source of helpful tips and advice for you as a new referee. All referees, including those who have done World Cup Games, have started just like you and have learned these lessons the hard way. The advice found here will get you off to the best possible start.

Remember to have fun!

How Does a New Referee Get Game Assignments?

- Initial assignments will likely come from a youth league assignor and will be in the lower level games. Even if you are an adult, it is best to start with lower level games with less intensity.
- Make sure you received the names of your local assignors during the entry level course. If you didn't, contact your instructor for the course and ask how you find out who assigns games in your area. Write down these names and how to contact them at the end of this booklet.
- When accepting more than one assignment in a day, make sure you allow enough time to travel to the next game. Make sure you remember you need to be there at least 30 minutes before kick-off
- Make sure you let your assignor know what your game schedule looks like if you are playing and if you have any conflicts of interest with other teams, such as family members playing on or coaching teams in the same league.
- If you are interested in working as a referee at tournaments in your state, watch for a listing on your state association website, or the referee committee website. The referee assignors for tournaments are usually listed, as well as a way to get in touch with them. Also, ask around for information on which tournaments are best for new officials.
- Game fees: The game fees paid to referees vary from state to state, and sometimes even from league to league. You will be able to find out what the game fees are and how you get paid from your assignor and/or your area (district) referee administrator.

Making a Good First Impression:

Know the Laws: Success begins by being prepared.

- Read and know the Laws of the Game. Keep up to date on the correct interpretations.
- Know the accepted mechanics approved by the USSF and found in the *Guide to Procedures for Referees, Assistant Referees and 4th Officials.* You should have received this booklet in your entry level course. If you did not, then contact your instructor or download it from USSoccer.com

- Know the local Rules of Competition. You can usually find them out by checking the league's website or asking your assignor. In particular, make sure you know:
    - Length of the half
    - Size of ball
    - Number of players
    - Substitutions
    - Penalty kicks or no penalty kicks
    - Direct free kicks allowed or only indirect free kicks
    - Offside, no offside
    - What you do with the game report
    - Uniform requirements
- As a new referee, you will not make all the right decisions. Don't get upset if you make a mistake. Just learn from it. And learn from working with and watching more experienced referees.

Dress and Act Professional:

- If you expect to command respect (one element of game control) on the field, then you must look and act like a professional.
- Approach the game in a way that shows you are looking forward to being there and being a part of the game.
- Dress for success - wear the proper USSF uniform with your referee jersey tucked in and your socks pulled up. Wear the uniform properly any time you can still be seen by the players, coaches, and spectators.

Take Charge:

- Taking charge does not mean yelling and acting like a dictator. This only encourages people to yell back at you.
- Greet each coach with a firm handshake, a smile and look each coach in the eyes.
- Use common courtesy- "Thank you", "Please", "Sir", "Ma'am" will do wonders to get respect
- Issue firm, simple instructions to the players so they know you are capable of managing the game.
- Start the game on time.

What You Need to Have:

- An approved USSF referee uniform. The gold shirt is the most often used referee shirt jersey color for referees so it should be the one jersey you purchase right away. If you are only getting one jersey, then (depending on your climate) you should probably buy the short sleeved one. You can add the long sleeve jersey later after. Once you have more game experience, you should add one of the alternate color jerseys. You do not need to buy all the different colored jerseys right away. However, if you advance as a referee, then you will need to add the alternate colors over the next few years.

- Solid black referee shorts or black shorts with the USSF Referee logo on the leg.
- Black socks with either three white stripes or the USSF logo at the top. Socks should always be pulled up to your knees. Pulling the socks down to your ankles when off the field may help your "tan line" but it looks unprofessional.

- Solid black shoes – a brand logo is OK, preferably only white, but no other colors or decorations – you will be spending a lot of time in your referee shoes so make sure they are very comfortable (and keep them cleaned as much as possible).
- Your current year USSF badge on the left shirt pocket of your jersey.
- Your 16 digit USSF identification number for tournaments. You will find this number on the ID card you receive in the mail after you have taken the course and registered. You will get a new card each year, but the number will always be the same. If you need your ID number before you receive your card, please contact your area referee administrator or your SRA/SYRA. If they don't have it, then you may contact U.S. Soccer.
- A referee bag that should contain the following:
    - A watch with stopwatch functions – two watches are preferred, one for starting and stopping and one for keeping a running time in case you forget to start or restart the first one
    - Pens/pencils
    - Notebook
    - Red and yellow cards
    - Tossing coins
    - Whistles – always have an extra in your bag
    - Flags for the Assistant Referees or Club Linesmen (if you are working alone)
    - Cold weather gear when the time of year makes it necessary
    - Street shoes and dry socks
    - A large plastic trash bag (to put your ref bag inside in case of rain)
    - Sunscreen
    - Snacks (energy bars are great!) if you are going to be doing more than one game
    - Rubber bands or baggies to hold and separate player/coach cards for each team
    - Water – don't forget to bring water

What You Need to Do:

- You should arrive at the field at least 30 minutes prior to the game.
- If you don't drive, first make sure that someone knows you need a ride to your field and, second, make sure you have made arrangements for someone to pick you up to take you home.
- Bring change for emergency telephone calls or a cell phone, and have the telephone number of your assignor and club contact.

Pre-Game Responsibilities

Inspect the Field:

- Look for holes or depressions that could cause twisted or broken ankles and see if holes can be filled. All dangerous rocks, trash, or other objects that don't belong on the field should be removed.
- Nets should be securely fastened to the goal posts and netting pulled back so as not to interfere with the goalkeeper.
- **Goal posts must be securely anchored to the ground**. Sandbags on the frame toward the rear are acceptable. Posts don't have to be in the ground, but the goal frame must not be easily tipped over. No matter how good the goals look at a distance, always carefully inspect them. If they are not securely anchored do not start the game. **Safety first!** Any problems, even if corrected, must be reported to the league and the SRA/SYRA.

- Corner flags are in place and are not dangerous to players (at least 5 ft high).
- Entire field is properly lined.
- <u>If anything is needed, the home team is responsible for fixing field problems</u>.
- Any issues with the field should be noted on the game report.

Check in the Players:

- Home team players/coaches should be checked first but it's not a requirement. You should start with the team that appears to be most ready for inspection.
- Make sure that all jewelry, earrings, watches, etc. have been removed. A medical ID must be taped to the player's chest or taped to the wrist with the info showing. (Earrings must be removed. Covering them with tape does not make them legal.)
- All players must wear shin guards and socks must be pulled over shin guards.
- Player's shirts are to be tucked in.
- Check in players and coaches as per the requirements and the Rules of Competition for that league.

If You Are the Assistant Referee:

- Pay close attention to the referee during the pre-game conference. If you don't understand something the referee is saying, ask for clarification.
- Make sure you understand what the referee wants you to do in managing substitutions, how long to hold the offside signal, etc.
- Hold the flag in the proper hand. The flag should be held in the hand closest to the referee. Referees usually run a left diagonal, which means the flag will be in your <u>left</u> hand most of the time.
- If you turn sideways to walk up or down the field, switch hands with the flag as necessary so the flag is field side and the referee can see the flag clearly. The flag should always be switched hand to hand in front of you, below your waist, and <u>not above your head</u>.
- Make eye contact with the referee as often as possible throughout the game when you are not watching for offside or attending to other AR duties. If you see the referee making eye contact with you, nod or give a "thumbs up" (or something similar) to "answer" the referee.
- Stay even with the second-to-last defender (remember - the goalkeeper is usually <u>but not always</u> the last defender). This gives you the best position you to make accurate offside decisions.
- Follow the ball all the way to the goal line so you'll be in position to see if the ball completely (even just barely) crosses the goal line. Following the ball to the goal line each time is an excellent habit to get into.
- When you're running a line, side-step so you stay square to the field as much as possible. This position allows you to continue to see the field and players. When you need to sprint hard to the goal line to follow play or the ball, then turn and run normally but still watch the field.

- Run to the corner flag, or close to it, when signaling for a goal kick or corner kick. Raising your flag yards away from the corner flag or goal line not only calls attention to the fact that you not in the correct position to make that decision, but also carries with it the idea that you are either lazy or you don't care enough about the game to be in the proper position to make the call. However, there are times when the ball moves faster in the air than you can run – don't worry about it, just do the best you can to catch up.
- Follow the referee**'s** pregame directions on handling substitutions but, in particular, make sure that you have counted the players coming off and the substitutes coming on so that you don't wind up with too many players on the field.

- When signaling for a ball that is clearly off the field across the touchline, point your flag in the direction the throw-in will be taken (not straight up). This is very helpful for the referee in making a decision on which team last touched the ball and which team should be awarded the throw-in.
- Assist the referee in making sure the throw-in is being taken from the correct spot by pointing with your free hand to where the player should be standing when taking the throw-in. Be proactive, don't wait for the player to make a mistake, help them get it right.

If You Are the Referee:

- You will probably do more games as an AR at first, but when you are assigned as a referee, remember to conduct a pre-game with your ARs. Tell them what you would like them to do in various situations, such as throw-ins, free kicks, goal kicks, etc. and make sure they understand what you are asking from them.
- Review offside and make sure the ARs have a clear understanding of the Rules of Competition for the league in which you are working.
- Be aware of your position on the field. It's tough enough to properly call a soccer match when you are on top of the play. It's impossible to make correct decisions when you stay close to or within the center circle. Even when officiating at the small-sided game level, get in the habit of being in the proper position and working hard.
- At first, you may have to remind yourself to lift the focus of your vision from the ball and the legs of the players so you learn to take in the whole area of active play. It is normal for new referees to have to make this conscious effort to lift their eyes. Once you are more experienced, it will be instinctive for you to see a large area of play if you condition yourself to do this from the beginning.
- Always think about your positioning - you should know why you are where you are. What do you gain by being in this position?
- Maintain good eye contact with your ARs throughout the game. A good habit to get into is to make eye contact with your ARs on every dead ball situation.

- If you are working a game alone, remember to appoint club linesmen to help you out with balls in and out of bounds. Club linesmen cannot call offside or fouls, so this means you have to work extra hard in the middle and concentrate to make sure you are covering offside on both ends of the field. You will have to adjust your diagonal accordingly when working alone so you are where you need to be. You should ask for a club linesman from each of the teams, rather than two from the same team.
- If you have only one official AR and will use only one club linesman, consider asking one team to supply someone for the first half and the other team for the second half.
- Make your hand signals clear. Point the direction with a straight arm, fingers extended together.

- Blow clear and sharp whistles. Learn how to make your whistle "talk" for you.
    - Use the whistle to communicate control. Too many newly certified referees make a call with barely an audible "tweet" which tells everyone on the field that you are unsure of yourself. On your first call, give the whistle a firm blast and confidently point in the direction of the play. A firm whistle will eliminate 50 percent of the arguments. Vary the strength of your whistle depending on what happened – if there is a serious foul, for example, blow the whistle very loudly an/or several times.

- Be decisive in your calls. Players and coaches may try to take advantage of the situation if you seem unsure.
- Run the diagonal system of control when you have ARs assigned with you. The most accepted diagonal system is from the right corner to the left corner – referees refer to this as a "left diagonal" – but remember that this is not a straight line. Go where you need to go to see what needs to be seen.
- If you do not have ARs assigned and you need to use spectators as linesmen, ask them to only indicate when the ball has completely crossed over the touchline or goal line and not the direction of the throw or whether it is a goal kick or corner kick. That is your decision. Remember that "ball in and out of play" is the only thing they can call as club linesmen.
- At half time and after the game, review all the results (number of cards, scores for each team and any incident that occurred, as well as the information required to be reported by that particular league) so your game report is accurate.
- When you are working with more experienced officials, ask them for help after the game and discuss situations where you think there was a problem.

Dealing with Problem Coaches:

- Set the ground rules – be proactive
    - Show them where the team and the coaches will be seated. Make sure they understand that they must stay in that area.
    - If there is more than one coach, ask which coach will be giving instruction to the players and who will be asking for subs.
- Don't let the coaches intimidate you. Give them respect and ask for respect in return

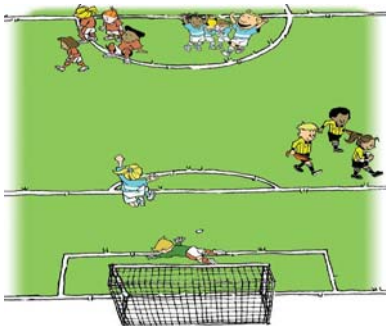
- Be confident in your knowledge of the Laws of the Game and Rules of Competition.
- Remain calm. If someone is hollering at you, don't yell back at them. Speak respectfully and quietly, so the coach must quiet down to hear you.
- Do not take someone yelling at you personally. It happens to all referees, even the most experienced. However, once the coach steps over the boundaries of the game and begins to make his comments personal or abusive, you must deal with it. Slowly and calmly walk over to the coach. In a polite and respectful way, inform the coach that this type of conduct is unsporting and continuing with this type conduct will result in his or her removal from the game. If the behavior continues – respectfully and professionally ask the coach to leave. If the coach refuses to leave, give the coach a warning that if he or she does not leave, you will end the game. If the coach does not leave in a reasonable amount of time (a few minutes), end the game. Be sure to file a very detailed report with the league so there is a good understanding of why the game was ended early.

Dealing with Problem Players:

- Make your presence known from the moment you walk on the field - that way players know you are in charge. Stand tall, look people in the eye and smile confidently. Have your pre-game questions down - introduce yourself even if you have worked games with the same coaches before, ask for copies of the rosters, get the game ball from the home team and inspect it, check in players. (Do not tell players how you are going to call the game and what you are going to call and not call. This can cause you major problems later on.) Doing these game management things confidently will carry over into the game.
- Remember to blow the whistle with confidence, even if you are not feeling so confident, and use decisive signals with straight arms.
- If you have a difficult player dissenting or doing something else to disrupt the game, at a stoppage of play, issue a caution to them and let the player know that kind of behavior is unacceptable. If the player still insists on being difficult, use a well delivered warning to let them know that you have just about reached the limit of what you are going to take. It is often helpful to let the coach know this particular player is wearing out their welcome and the team may soon be playing short. Give the coach an opportunity to take care of the problem for you (perhaps by substituting out this player). If the bad behavior continues, issue a second caution and then a send off (red card). Remember that the proper procedure for this is to display the second yellow card and then the red.
- Remain calm when talking to players, but be firm in your voice and your decisions. Do not yell at players and never use foul or abusive language no matter what they are saying to you. Speak softly so the players must quiet down to hear you.
- Listen to what players are saying. Allow them to vent for a few seconds without calling it dissent, so long as it does not become abusive or personal (however, if you are the referee, never allow a player to vent at one of you AR's). You might find out about fouls you are missing, or there may be something else going on that can be easily corrected. This tactic also lets the players know you are willing to listen … up to a certain point. This type of exchange should not go on often in a game and should be very brief (for example, in the "heat of the moment"). If it goes on longer, you must deal with it. The more experience you have as a referee, the easier it is to know how, when, and where to set boundaries.

Dealing with Problem Parents

- Remain calm.
- Do not get into discussions or arguments with the sidelines.
- Enlist the support of the coach. Ask him to speak with the offending spectators and let him know that, if the behavior continues, the game will not. This will usually be enough to quiet most parents (other parents may understand the consequences and help with the problem spectator).
- If you have asked the coach to deal with problem parents and the situation continues, ask the coach to have the spectator leave the area. If the spectator refuses, tell the coach that, if the spectator is not removed, the game will end. Give the coach a reasonable amount of time (a few minutes) to deal with the situation. Remember, you cannot dismiss a spectator directly but must work through the coach or a tournament or league official.
- If the parent does not leave, you should feel free to end the game. Include any misbehavior on the part of the spectators in your game report to the league so that this type of behavior can be disciplined and stopped. Most leagues and state associations have methods for dealing with bad behavior, but doing so often requires a written report from the referee.



How Do Referees Improve?

- To be a good referee, you must continue to learn and improve with every game**.**
- Experience is the best teacher and confidence builder. The more games you do, the more comfortable and confident you'll be.
- If something occurs in a game and you aren't sure if you made the correct decision, go back to the Laws of the Game and Advice to Referees after the game and double check.
- Talk to more experienced referees about the decision you made and whether or not you should have done something differently. Call or email an experienced referee with the question.
- Watch experienced referees and notice how they deal with specific situations that cause you trouble in a game.
- Have experienced referees watch and critique you, and then remember to try the suggestions they give you.
- Seek out experienced referees to work with. By running lines for experienced referees, you gain a better appreciation as to what the protocols of the game are as well as learning about ways in which you can improve your game. This is an excellent tool. Once you have done this for several games, ask to have experienced referees as your assistant referees when you work the center.

- Go slow in advancing to more difficult matches – don't rush it, but also challenge yourself to keep growing as a referee by taking more challenging assignments once you have reached a comfort level where you are currently being assigned.
- Attend seminars, workshops and clinics.
- Watch games of every age and competitive level whenever possible. This helps you not only by watching skilled referees work, it also helps you to learn more about the game is played.

Next Year is Just Around the Corner – Recertification:

- Referees must register each year with U.S. Soccer through their State Referee Administrator. The Referee Administrative Handbook tells you what you need to do to recertify.
- The email addresses for all state referee administrators can be found at ussoccer.com/Referee Programs.
- If you don't know when or where to recertify for the upcoming year, contact your State Referee Administrator (SRA), State Youth Referee Administrator (SYRA) or State Director of Instruction (SDI) in the fall or winter, before the beginning of the next year.
- Referee registration for the calendar year with U.S. Soccer ends on June 30th of each year. If you want to referee in the fall, you must recertify before June of that year. You must be registered for a calendar year before you take the field in that calendar year.
- If you miss a year of registration, you can register once again by taking a recertification course and passing the test, however you cannot register until after January 1 of the year for which you are registered.

Resources:

- **Laws of the Game** (and **Laws of the Game Made Easy**)
- **Guide to Procedures for Referees, Assistant Referees and 4th Officials**
- **Referee Administrative Handbook** – you will find the criteria for upgrading here, along with how to write misconduct reports and other valuable information about the Referee Program
- **Advice to Referees** – may be downloaded and printed
- **Offside Made Easy**
- Position papers – all are available at ussoccer.com/Laws of the Game
- You Make the Call
- Ask a Referee (follow the link on the USSF website)
- Many other training presentations are available at the USSF website

Do You Need Questions Answered or Additional Advice?

Talk to your State Referee Administrator, State Youth Referee Administrator, State Director of Instruction, or State Director of Assessment for their guidance, as they are there to help you. Remember that you can find their email addresses at ussoccer.com/Referee Programs or on your state's website.

Information I Need to Have

The assignors for my area are:

_____ email: _____phone:_____

_____ email:_____phone:_____

My entry level instructors were:

_____ email:_____phone:_____

_____ email:_____phone:_____

My Area Referee Administrator is:

_____email:_____phone:_____

The State Referee Administrator is:

_____email:_____phone:_____

The State Referee Administrator is:

_____email:_____phone:_____

The local referee website is: _____

I can recertify for next year beginning (date)_____

If I don't hear anything about recertification, I should contact:

_____ email:_____phone:_____

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