

DEFINITIONS

At the start of a game all players are onside. As the match progresses players may find themselves in an offside position. Such players are then liable to be penalised until they become onside again.

In general play a player is offside if the player is in front of a team-mate who is carrying the ball, or in front of a team-mate who last played the ball.

Offside means that a player is temporarily out of the game. Such players are liable to be penalised if they take part in the game.

In general play, a player can be put onside either by an action of a team-mate or by an action of an opponent. However, the offside player cannot be put onside if the offside player interferes with play; or moves forward, towards the ball, or fails to move 10 metres away from the place where the ball lands.

11.1 OFFSIDE IN GENERAL PLAY

- (a) A player who is in an offside position is liable to sanction only if the player does one of three things:
- Interferes with play or,
 - Moves forward, towards the ball or
 - Fails to comply with the 10-Metre Law (Law 11.4).

A player who is in an offside position is not automatically penalised.

A player who receives an unintentional throw forward is not offside.

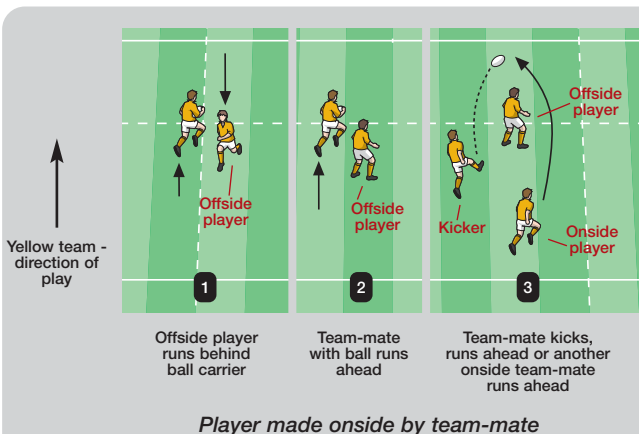
A player can be offside in the in-goal.

- (b) **Offside and interfering with play.** A player who is offside must not take part in the game. This means the player must not play the ball or obstruct an opponent.
- (c) **Offside and moving forward.** When a team-mate of an offside player has kicked ahead, the offside player must not move towards opponents who are waiting to play the ball, or move towards the place where the ball lands, until the player has been put onside.

11.2 BEING PUT ONSIDE BY THE ACTION OF A TEAM-MATE

In general play, there are three ways by which an offside player can be put onside by actions of that player or of team mates:

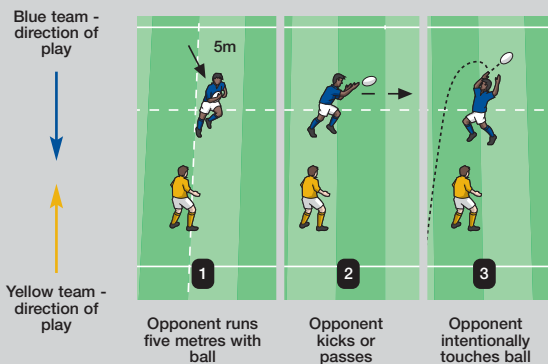
- Action by the player.** When the offside player runs behind the team-mate who last kicked, touched or carried the ball, the player is put onside.
- Action by the ball carrier.** When a team-mate carrying the ball runs in front of the offside player, that player is put onside.
- Action by the kicker or other onside player.** When the kicker, or team-mate who was level with or behind the kicker when (or after) the ball was kicked, runs in front of the offside player, the player is put onside. When running forward, the team-mate may be in touch or touch-in-goal, but that team-mate must return to the playing area to put the player onside.



11.3 BEING PUT ONSIDE BY OPPONENTS

In general play, there are three ways by which an offside player can be put onside by an action of the opposing team. These three ways do not apply to a player who is offside under the 10-Metre Law.

- Runs 5 metres with ball.** When an opponent carrying the ball runs 5 metres, the offside player is put onside.
- Kicks or passes.** When an opponent kicks or passes the ball, the offside player is put onside.
- Intentionally touches ball.** When an opponent intentionally touches the ball but does not catch it, the offside player is put onside.



Player put onside by opponents

11.4 OFFSIDE UNDER THE 10-METRE LAW

- (a) When a team-mate of an offside player has kicked ahead, the offside player is considered to be taking part in the game if the player is in front of an imaginary line across the field which is 10 metres from the opponent waiting to play the ball, or from where the ball lands or may land. The offside player must immediately move behind the imaginary 10-metre line or the kicker if this is closer than 10 metres. While moving away, the player must not obstruct an opponent.
Sanction: Penalty kick
- (b) While moving away, the offside player cannot be put onside by any action of the opposing team. However, before the player has moved the full 10 metres, the player can be put onside by any onside team-mate who runs in front of the player.
- (c) When a player who is offside under the 10-Metre Law charges an opponent waiting to catch the ball, the referee blows the whistle at once and the offside player is penalised. Delay may prove dangerous to the opponent.
Sanction: Penalty kick
- (d) When a player who is offside under the 10-metre Law plays the ball which has been misfielded by an opponent, the offside player is penalised.
Sanction: Penalty kick
- (e) The 10-metre Law is not altered by the fact that the ball has hit a goal post or a crossbar. What matters is where the ball lands. An offside player must not be in front of the imaginary 10-metre line across the field.
Sanction: Penalty kick
- (f) The 10-metre Law does not apply when a player kicks the ball, and an opponent charges down the kick, and a team-mate of the kicker who was in front of the imaginary 10-metre line across the field then plays the ball. The opponent was not 'waiting to play the ball' and the team-mate is onside. The 10-metre Law applies if the ball touches or is played by an opponent but is not charged down.
Sanction: When a player is penalised for being offside in general play, the opposing team chooses either a penalty kick at the place of infringement or a scrum at the place where the offending team last played the ball. If it was last played in that team's in-goal, the scrum is formed 5 metres from the goal line in line with where it was played.



- (g) If more than one player is offside and moving forward after a team-mate has kicked ahead, the place of infringement is the position of the offside player closest to an opponent waiting for the ball, or closest to where the ball lands.

11.5 BEING PUT ONSIDE UNDER THE 10-METRE LAW

- (a) The offside player must retire behind the imaginary 10-metre line across the field, otherwise the player is liable to be penalised.
- (b) While retiring, the player can be put onside before moving behind the imaginary 10-metre line by any of the three actions of the player's team listed above in 11.2. However, the player cannot be put onside by any action of the opposing team.

11.6 ACCIDENTAL OFFSIDE

- (a) When an offside player cannot avoid being touched by the ball or by a team-mate carrying it, the player is accidentally offside. If the player's team gains no advantage from this, play continues. If the player's team gains an advantage, a scrum is formed with the opposing team throwing in the ball.
- (b) When a player hands the ball to a team-mate in front of the first player, the receiver is offside. Unless the receiver is considered to be intentionally offside (in which case a penalty kick is awarded), the receiver is accidentally offside and a scrum is formed with the opposing team throwing in the ball.

11.7 OFFSIDE AFTER A KNOCK-ON

When a player knocks-on and an offside team-mate next plays the ball, the offside player is liable to sanction if playing the ball prevented an opponent from gaining an advantage.

Sanction: Penalty kick



11.8 PUTTING ONSIDE A PLAYER RETIRING DURING A RUCK, MAUL, SCRUM OR LINEOUT

When a ruck, maul, scrum or lineout forms, a player who is offside and is retiring as required by Law remains offside even when the opposing team wins possession and the ruck, maul, scrum or lineout has ended. The player is put onside by retiring behind the applicable offside line. No other action of the offside player and no action of that player's team mates can put the offside player onside.

If the player remains offside the player can be put onside only by the action of the opposing team. There are two such actions:

Opponent runs 5 metres with ball. When an opponent carrying the ball has run 5 metres, the offside player is put onside. An offside player is not put onside when an opponent passes the ball. Even if the opponents pass the ball several times, their action does not put the offside player onside.

Opponent kicks. When an opponent kicks the ball, the offside player is put onside.

11.9 LOITERING

A player who remains in an offside position is loitering. A loiterer who prevents the opposing team from playing the ball as they wish is taking part in the game, and is penalised. The referee makes sure that the loiterer does not benefit from being put onside by the opposing team's action.

Sanction: Penalty kick at the offending player's offside line