

Standardised Instructions for Assistant Referees

Referees will ask their assistant referees to carry out their duties in accordance with the following instructions. The following instructions are to be adhered to where official assistant referees have been appointed.

These instructions have been prepared with reference to the Practical Guidelines for Match Officials as issued by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) and additional guidance from Football Federation Australia, published in the 2017-18 FFA Laws of the Game (LOTG) publication – the page numbers identify correspond to the appropriate section. Where there is a variance from what is listed in the LOTG publication, it has been noted and listed in italics.

Relationships between referees and their assistants

Relationships should be based on trust and mutual respect. These conditions are essential if the overseeing team is to operate at an optimum level. Referees must accept that they are charged with the responsibility of controlling matches. They should accept this key responsibility, make decisions, and not force or allow their assistants to make the critical decisions. Assistants offer opinions and assist the referee; they do not direct or command. If the referee has seen an incident assistants should only intervene in extreme circumstances.

This principle extends to all decisions including offside. A referee should not automatically accept an assistant's signal and must be prepared to decline that advice if considered appropriate to do so.

Being an effective assistant is a multi-skilled and complex task. It demands total concentration throughout the match. Whether the ball is in or out of play, close to the assistant or distant, the assistant must concentrate fully. Assistants are not spectators at a match; they have important roles to fulfil.

Pre-Match

- Referees must instruct the assistant referees to operate on the right wing.
- The referee will determine the time and routine for warming up, which the assistant referees will be expected to take part in, unless they are officiating in the preceding fixture.
- Player's equipment shall be checked by the assistant referees prior to entry to the field of play.
- Goal nets will be checked by the assistant referees in their half of the field of play after the coin toss, and again immediately prior to the commencement of the second half.
- Electronic equipment (e.g. beep flags, communications systems), where used, will be tested prior to entry to the field of play, re-tested immediately prior to kick-off and again immediately prior to the start of the second half. Officials should not rely on electronic equipment but use it as a supplementary tool where listed below.

Positioning, Movement & Teamwork

Consultation

When dealing with disciplinary issues, eye contact and a basic discreet hand signal from the AR to the referee may be sufficient. When direct consultation is required, the AR may advance 2-3 metres onto the field of play if necessary. When talking, the referee and AR should both face the field of play to avoid being heard by others and to observe the players and field of play.

Goal kick

The AR must first check the ball is inside the goal area. If the ball is not placed correctly, the AR must not move from the position, make eye contact with the referee and raise the flag.

Once the ball is placed correctly inside the goal area, the AR should turn and run in a forward direction and take a position in line with the second-last opponent.

If the goal kick is likely to be played short, the assistant referee should be prepared to monitor the ball leaving the penalty area before another player touches it, as well as attacking players entering the penalty area before the ball is in play.

Goalkeeper releasing the ball

The AR must take a position in line with the edge of the penalty area and check that the goalkeeper does not handle the ball outside the penalty area. Once the goalkeeper has released the ball, the AR must take a position to check the offside line.

Mass confrontation

In situations of mass confrontation, the nearest AR may enter the field of play to assist the referee. The other AR must observe and record details of the incident. The fourth official, where one is appointed, should remain in the vicinity of the technical areas.

Required distance

When a free kick is awarded very close to the AR, the AR may enter the field of play (usually at the request of the referee) to help ensure that the players are positioned 9.15m from the ball. In this case, the referee must wait until the AR is back in position before restarting play.

Substitution

If there is no fourth official, the AR moves to the halfway line to assist with the substitution procedure; the referee must wait until the AR is back in position before restarting play. If there is a fourth official, the AR does not need to move to the halfway line as the fourth official carries out the substitution procedure, unless there are several substitutions at the same time in which case the AR moves to the halfway line to assist the fourth official.

Free kick to defending team in final third of field

At free kicks to the defending team in the final third of the field, the assistant referee must stay in line with the position of the free kick and remain there to ensure that the ball is correctly placed.

Only when they are satisfied that the position of the ball is correct and will not be moved, should the assistant referee move in line with the second last opponent.

After an offside

When possible, an assistant referee, after a free kick for offside has been given, should be positioned in line with the spot where the ball should be positioned to restart the game. The assistant referee should then immediately take up a position to control the offside line (level with the second last opponent), which is the assistant referee's priority.

Penalty kick procedures

When a penalty kick is awarded during the normal course of play, the assistant should be on the goal line where it meets the penalty area boundary line.

Goal scoring celebrations

The assistant referee should not form a physical barrier to try to stop players leaving the field of play or entering the spectator areas during goal scoring celebrations. The assistant referee's duty is to make a smart movement towards the halfway line to signify that there are no problems with the goal. When it is likely that players may leave the field of play in these circumstances it is recommended that the assistant referee stops after 5-10m to be able to credibly assist the referee with identification of any players to be cautioned for excessive goal scoring celebrations.

Obvious incorrect decision of the referee

If an assistant referee knows that a referee has made an obvious disciplinary error (e.g. two yellow cards to the same player without sending them off, red or yellow card to the wrong player, etc), they must intervene immediately (flag and beep or even enter the field of play if necessary). The other assistant referee (or fourth official if appointed) should, if necessary, also assist in such cases.

Communication

Beep signal - The beep signal system is an additional signal which is only used to gain the referee's attention. Situations when the signal beep may be useful include offside, offences outside the view of the referee, or tight decisions for throw-ins, corner kicks, goal kicks or goals.

Electronic communication system

Where an electronic communication system is used, the referee will advise the ARs before the match as to when it may be appropriate to use the communication system with, or instead of, a physical signal.

Flag technique

The AR's flag must always be unfurled and visible to the referee. This usually means the flag is carried in the hand closest to the referee. When making a signal, the AR stops running, faces the field of play, makes eye contact with the referee and raises the flag with a deliberate (not hasty or exaggerated) motion. The flag should be like an extension of the arm. The ARs must raise the flag using the hand that will be used for the next signal. If circumstances change and the other hand must be used, the

AR should move the flag to the opposite hand below the waist. If the AR signals that the ball is out of play, the signal must be maintained until the referee acknowledges it.

If the AR signals for a sending-off offence and the signal is not seen immediately:

- If play has been stopped, the restart may be changed in accordance with the Laws (free kick, penalty kick etc.)
- If play has restarted, the referee may still take disciplinary action but not penalise the offence with a free kick or penalty kick.

Gestures

As a general rule, the AR should not use obvious hand signals. However, in some instances, a discreet hand signal may assist the referee. The hand signal should have a clear meaning which should have been agreed in the pre-match discussion.

Corner kick / goal kick

When the ball wholly passes over the goal line the AR raises the flag with the right hand (better line of vision) to inform the referee that the ball is out of play and then if it is:

- Near to the AR – indicate whether it is a goal kick or corner kick
- Far from the AR – make eye contact and follow the referee's decision

When the ball clearly passes over the goal line the AR does not need to raise the flag to indicate that the ball has left the field of play. If the goal kick or corner kick decision is obvious, it is not necessary to give a signal, especially when the referee gives a signal.

Fouls

The AR must raise the flag when a foul or misconduct is committed in the immediate vicinity or out of the referee's vision. In all other situations, the AR must wait and offer an opinion if it is required and then inform the referee what was seen and heard, and which players were involved.

Before signalling for an offence, the AR must determine that:

- The offence was out of the referee's view or the referee's view was obstructed
- The referee would not have applied the advantage.

When an offence/infringement occurs which requires a signal from the AR, the AR must:

- Raise the flag with the same hand that will also be used for the remainder of the signal – this gives the referee a clear indication as to who will be awarded the free kick
- Make eye contact with the referee
- Give the flag a slight wave back and forth (avoiding any excessive or aggressive movement)

The AR must use the "wait and see technique" to allow play to continue and not raise the flag when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from the advantage; it is therefore very important for the AR to make eye contact with the referee.

Fouls inside the penalty area

When a foul is committed by a defender inside the penalty area out of the vision of the referee,

especially if near to the AR's position, the AR must first make eye contact with the referee to see where the referee is positioned and what action has been taken. If the referee has not taken any action, the AR must signal with the flag, use the electronic beep signal and then visibly move down the touchline towards the corner flag.

Fouls outside the penalty area

When a foul is committed by a defender outside the penalty area (near the boundary of the penalty area), the AR should make eye contact with the referee, to see the referee's position and what action has been taken, and signal with the flag if necessary. In counter-attack situations, the AR should be able to give information such as whether a foul has been committed and whether a foul was committed inside or outside the penalty area, and what disciplinary action should be taken. The AR should make a clear movement along the touchline towards the halfway line to indicate when the offence took place outside the penalty area.

Goal / no goal

When a goal has been scored and there is no doubt about the decision, the referee and assistant referee must make eye contact and the assistant referee must then move quickly 25-30 metres along the touchline towards the halfway line without raising the flag.

When a goal has been scored but the ball appears still to be in play, the assistant referee must first raise the flag to attract the referee's attention then continue with the normal goal procedure of running quickly 25-30 metres along the touchline towards the halfway line.

On occasions when the whole of the ball does not cross the goal line and play continues normal because a goal has not been scored, the referee must make eye contact with the assistant referee and if necessary, give a discreet hand signal.

Offside

To ensure correct judgement of offside offences, an assistant referee should not raise the flag before considering the following criteria, using the so called "wait and see" technique:

- Movement of the ball (direction, speed, distance, any deflection, etc)
- Involvement of the player in active play by:
 - o Interfering with play;
 - o Interfering with an opponent; or
 - o Gaining an advantage by being in an offside position

Both referees and assistant referees must be fully aware of the most up to date interpretations and guidance with regards to offside players being involved in active play.

The first action of the AR for an offside decision is to raise the flag (using the right hand, giving the AR a better line of vision) and then if the referee stops play use the flag to indicate the area of the field of play in which the offence occurred.

If the flag is not immediately seen by the referee, the AR must maintain the signal until it has been acknowledged or the ball is clearly in the control of the defending team.

If available, the electronic beep signal or communications system may be used to alert the referee to the flag signal.

Remember that it is better to be slightly late and correct, than to be too quick and wrong.

Penalty kick

If the goalkeeper blatantly moves off the goal line before the ball is kicked and a goal is not scored, the AR must raise the flag.

Substitution

Once the AR has been informed (by the fourth official or team official) that a substitution is requested, the AR must signal this to the referee at the next stoppage.

Throw-in

When the ball wholly passes over the touchline:

- Near to the AR – a direct signal should be made to indicate the direction of the throw-in
- Far from the AR and the throw-in decision is an obvious one – the AR must make a direct signal to indicate the direction of the throw-in
- Far from the AR and the AR is in doubt about the direction of the throw-in – the AR must raise the flag to inform the referee that the ball is out of play, make eye contact with the referee and follow the referee's signal

Using the eyes

The key to effective co-operation between referees and assistants is eye contact. Only by looking at the referee and being aware of the referee's position can an assistant decide if intervention is necessary.

Assistants should never interfere in the referee's running of a match. They should only draw the referee's attention to incidents that the referee could **not** see clearly. If a foul occurs, but the referee does not react (e.g. does not award a free kick, does not 'chat' a player, etc.), check the referee's position. Do not signal if the referee had a clear view of the incident. If the referee's view was blocked, flag to advise that an offence has occurred.

Attempt to make eye contact with the referee before raising your flag. This technique can clarify whether the referee is seeking assistance. It also minimises the risk of conflicting signals being given. The principle is simple: **confer then decide**.

Record keeping

Keep a complete record of all key match events (goals, substitutions, cautions, send offs, etc.) plus the time that each event occurred. This may prevent arguments over whether the same player has been cautioned twice, the number of substitutions made, goal scorers, and so on. Match officials should compare and check their records at half time and full time.

Incidents behind the referee's back

Assistants have to be alert to player misconduct that occurs behind the referee's back. The key to success is to keep an eye on any area where players from opposing teams are close together.

As a general rule if an offence occurs that requires action by the referee, wait until the referee is facing you before raising your flag. When the referee has stopped play, beckon the referee to you and report to the referee what you have seen and/or heard. It is not the assistant's role to insist what action the referee should take – just simply report what has happened. However, if the referee requests a recommendation on an appropriate response, you may offer an opinion.

In cases of serious breaches of the Laws one or both assistants may choose to flag even though the referee's back is turned. This is appropriate if it is believed that this may prevent further problems. If only assistant has flagged it will alert the other assistant who may then flag if the referee is looking in that direction. Both assistants must be aware of each other's actions for this system to be effective.

This cooperation also applies when the assistant nearest the technical area signals that a substitution is required, but the referee is facing away from that assistant and cannot see the signal. The other assistant should assist by also signalling for a substitution.

Attentive assistants are likely to enhance each other's roles and the match as a whole.

Zone of play

As a general rule assistants should indicate offences that have occurred in their own zone of play. However, should a major violation occur the assistant **must** draw the referee's attention to it even if the incident occurs on the far side of the field. This is required under Law 6. Before signalling consider and rapidly answer these questions:

- Was the referee able to see what happened?
- If I signal for the offence, will I be assisting or interfering?

At half time and full time

When the referee whistles for half time and full time both assistants should sprint to the referee so the three officials can leave as a team. Do not stroll across the field or wait for the referee to reach you – move quickly to the side of the referee.

During stoppages

When play is stopped by the referee for an injured player or for a substitution, the appropriate assistant should stand opposite where the play should restart. This will help the referee recommence the match from the correct position. It may even be necessary to move down the line a little way past halfway into the other half.