

## LAW 3 – THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS

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### Players

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A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eleven players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven players.

### Official Competitions

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Up to a maximum of three substitutes may be used in any match played in an official competition organised under the auspices of FIFA, the confederations or the member associations.

The rules of the competition must state how many substitutes may be nominated, from three up to a maximum of seven.

### Other Matches

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In national A team matches, up to a maximum of six substitutes may be used.

In all other matches, a greater number of substitutes may be used provided that:

- the teams concerned reach agreement on a maximum number
- the referee is informed before the match

If the referee is not informed, or if no agreement is reached before the match, no more than six substitutes are allowed.

### All Matches

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In all matches, the names of the substitutes must be given to the referee prior to the start of the match. Any substitute whose name is not given to the referee at this time may not take part in the match.



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### Substitution Procedure

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To replace a player with a substitute, the following conditions must be observed:

- the referee must be informed before any proposed substitution is made
- the substitute only enters the field of play after the player being replaced has left and after receiving a signal from the referee
- the substitute only enters the field of play at the halfway line and during a stoppage in the match
- the substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play
- from that moment, the substitute becomes a player and the player he has replaced becomes a substituted player
- the substituted player takes no further part in the match
- all substitutes are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referee, whether called upon to play or not

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## Changing the Goalkeeper

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Any of the other players may change places with the goalkeeper, provided that:

- the referee is informed before the change is made
- the change is made during a stoppage in the match

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## Infringements and Sanctions

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If a substitute or substituted player enters the field of play without the referee's permission:

- the referee stops play (although not immediately if the substitute or substituted player does not interfere with play)
- the referee cautions him for unsporting behaviour and orders him to leave the field of play
- if the referee has stopped play, it is restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team from the position of the ball at the time of the stoppage (see Law 13 – Position of Free Kick)

If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission before the change is made:

- the referee allows play to continue
- the referee cautions the players concerned when the ball is next out of play

In the event of any other infringements of this Law:

- the players concerned are cautioned
- the match is restarted with an indirect free kick, to be taken by a player of the opposing team from the position of the ball at the time of the stoppage (see Law 13 – Position of Free Kick)

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## Players and Substitutes Sent Off

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A player who has been sent off before the kick-off may be replaced only by one of the named substitutes.

A named substitute who has been sent off, either before the kick-off or after play has started, may not be replaced.

# **INTERPRETATION OF LAW 3 AND GUIDELINES FOR REFEREES**

### Substitution procedure

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- A substitution may be made only during a stoppage in play
- The assistant referee signals that a substitution has been requested
- The player being substituted receives the referee's permission to leave the field of play, unless he is already off the field of play for reasons that comply with the Laws of the Game
- The referee gives the substitute permission to enter the field of play
- Before entering the field of play, the substitute waits for the player he is replacing to leave the field
- The player being substituted is not obliged to leave the field of play on the halfway line
- Permission to proceed with a substitution may be refused under certain circumstances, e.g. if the substitute is not ready to enter the field of play
- A substitute who has not completed the substitution procedure by setting foot onto the field of play cannot restart play by taking a throw-in or corner kick
- If a player who is about to be replaced refuses to leave the field of play, play continues
- If a substitution is made during the half-time interval or before extra time, the procedure is to be completed before the second half or extra time kicks off

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### Extra persons on the field of play

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#### ***Outside agents***

Anyone not indicated on the team list as a player, substitute or team official is deemed to be an outside agent as is a player who has been sent off.

If an outside agent enters the field of play:

- the referee must stop play (although not immediately if the outside agent does not interfere with play)
- the referee must have him removed from the field of play and its immediate surroundings
- if the referee stops the match, he must restart play with a dropped ball in the position where the ball was at the time when the match was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped

#### ***Team officials***

If a team official enters the field of play:

- the referee must stop play (although not immediately if the team official does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- the referee must have him removed from the field of play and if his behaviour is irresponsible, the referee must expel him from the field of play and its immediate surroundings
- if the referee stops the match, he must restart play with a dropped ball in the position where the ball was at the time when the match was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the goal area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped

### ***Player outside the field of play***

If, after leaving the field of play to correct unauthorised equipment or kit, to be treated for an injury or bleeding, because he has blood on his kit or for any other reason with the referee's permission, a player re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission, the referee must:

- stop play (although not immediately if the player does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- caution the player for entering the field of play without permission
- order the player to leave the field of play if necessary (e.g. infringement of Law 4)

If the referee stops play, it must be restarted:

- with an indirect free kick for the opposing team from the position of the ball when play was stopped (see Law 13 – Position of Free Kick) if there is no other infringement
- in accordance with Law 12 if the player infringes this Law

If a player accidentally crosses one of the boundary lines of the field of play, he is not deemed to have committed an infringement. Going off the field of play may be considered to be part of a playing movement.

### ***Substitute or substituted player***

If a substitute or a substituted player enters the field of play without permission:

- the referee must stop play (although not immediately if the player in question does not interfere with play or if the advantage can be applied)
- the referee must caution him for unsporting behaviour
- the player must leave the field of play

If the referee stops play, it must be restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team from the position of the ball when play was stopped (see Law 13 – Position of Free Kick).

### Goal scored with an extra person on the field of play

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If, after a goal is scored, the referee realises, before play restarts, that there was an extra person on the field of play when the goal was scored:

- the referee must disallow the goal if:
  - the extra person was an outside agent and he interfered with play
  - the extra person was a player, substitute, substituted player or team official associated with the team that scored the goal
- the referee must allow the goal if:
  - the extra person was an outside agent who did not interfere with play
  - the extra person was a player, substitute, substituted player or team official associated with the team that conceded the goal

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### Minimum number of players

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If the rules of a competition state that all of the players and substitutes must be named before kick-off and a team begins a match with fewer than 11 players, only the players named in the starting line-up may complete the 11 upon their arrival.

Although a match may not START if either team consists of fewer than seven players, the minimum number of players in a team required for a match to CONTINUE is left to the discretion of member associations. However, it is the opinion of the International F.A. Board that a match should not continue if there are fewer than seven players in either team.

If a team has fewer than seven players because one or more players has deliberately left the field of play, the referee is not obliged to stop the match and the advantage may be played. In such cases, the referee must not allow the match to resume after the ball has gone out of play if a team does not have the minimum number of seven players.