



## How to explain the offside rule to U10s

I can guarantee I will receive at least one email a day from a coach who is worried that his or her players won't be able to understand the offside rule when they make the step-up from mini soccer to the "proper" game.

In fact, teaching players Law 11 is like a rite of passage for youth soccer coaches. You can't be a "proper" coach until you've done it.

And similarly to the ritual visit to the local bar with your parents when you come of age, it can be an unwelcome and awkward experience.

But it really doesn't have to be like that.

Law 11 (the offside rule) is simple:

A player is in an offside position if he is nearer to the opposition's goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent (but a player can't be offside if he receives the ball directly from a goal kick, throw-in or corner kick).

In this illustration, for example, the player (red) who is about to receive the ball is offside.



That's not too difficult, is it?

But wait... we haven't finished with Law 11 yet.

Law 11 also says it is not an offence to be in an offside position UNLESS the player in the offside position is - at the moment the ball is played by a member of his team - involved in active play.

### What is "active play"?

Law 11 defines active play as:

- Interfering with play
- Interfering with an opponent.
- Gaining an advantage by being in that position.

For a lot of coaches, that's the stumbling block - how should you explain active play to a group of 10-year-olds?

Let's do it by using some examples involving "David", a player who is in an offside position, i.e., he is standing nearer to the goal than his last two opponents.

<b>What happens next</b>	<b>Is the ref going to blow his whistle?</b>	<b>Why?</b>
David receives a pass from a team mate.	Yes	He is "active" because he offside and interfering with play.
David is standing right in front of the opposition keeper as a team mate shoots at goal.	Yes	He is committing an offence by being in an offside position and interfering with an opponent - the goalkeeper.
A team mate shoots and hits the bar. The ball rebounds to David who kicks it into the net.	Yes	The "goal" will be disallowed because David was gaining an advantage from being in an offside position.
David is an an offside position near the left touchline. The ball is crossed to a player standing on the penalty spot who scores.	No	No offence has been committed because David is not interfering with play or an opponent or gaining an advantage by being offside. So the goal stands.

You can test your players' understanding by playing a small-sided game and setting up these situations.

But ultimately it's the referee who decides if a player is committing an offence by being in an offside position.

So his or her opinion is the only one that matters and (as we all know!) the referee is always right!