

Tips and tricks for referees starting out in junior football



Good on you for putting your hand up to be your team's referee. That's half the trick. But knowing some of the basics around looking the part, communicating your decisions, and applying the laws and regulations will help you to be more confident and enjoy your refereeing.

Look and move like a referee

Kids are more likely to respect you and have confidence in your refereeing if you look the part.

- Wear sensible clothing - preferably football boots/studded shoes, shorts and a shirt that's distinct from the players' tops. (Official gear for Capital Football matches.)
- Gumboots or jeans are not a good look - nor practical
- Referee with a wrist watch - not a phone.
- Hold the whistle in your hand (and attach it with a wrist strap). Don't dangle it around your neck (you're not a PE teacher or keystone cop)
- Record the score - simple pen and paper/cardboard is fine. (You're the sole judge of the result)
- Keep up with play - try not to loiter in the centre circle
- Get side-on to tackles
- And get close to or in the penalty area when the play is inside it ... that's where you earn your money!
- Play advantage as much as you can ... a fast or flowing game's a good game.



Communicate like a referee

Players and spectators should be able to understand your decisions by your arm signals and whistle tunes alone.



- Make prompt decisions and stick to them (unless your error is clear and obvious to you ... one of those 'My bad' moments)
- Use straight, outstretched arms - learn the signals for throw-ins, corners, free kicks and goals
- Don't blow for goals, goal kicks, throw-in or corners
- Save loud, long blasts for penalties and more serious free kicks.
- Short, successive little pips of your whistle are good or stopping play, such as substitutions
- **Never, never coach** when you're refereeing ... but it's fine to offer encouragement and clarification around the laws and regulations.
- Smile when you referee - kids love it.

Know the laws and regulations like a referee

At junior football level, it's just as important to know your grade's regulations as the full laws of the game.



- Complete the Capital Football/NZ Football intro to refereeing course - this will give you a good overview of the 17 laws (which apply to every level of football), and will register you as a referee (your genesis to greatness)
- Learn the Capital Football regulations for the junior grades you referee, and as they relate to things like: match duration; free kicks; throw-ins; and even the coin-toss.
- **Retreating line rule** - know it inside out (including restarts after an infringement) and enforce it (too many referees don't) because this regulation is vital in building kids' confidence in playing the ball out from their defensive area.
- Know and recognize the 7 (careless, reckless or excessive force) + 5

contact fouls (including handball). At junior level, we rarely have to decide whether fouls are anything more than careless, so you shouldn't need to pull out your yellow or red cards.

- Handball - ask yourself, was there a deliberate play at the ball or did the player make themselves '*unnaturally*' bigger?
- And yes, contrary to 'popular opinion' you can give penalties, and award free kicks for the so-called 'back pass' rule. Remember: the laws of the game apply to every level of football, and your role is to apply them fairly - and in the spirit of the game - and alongside each grade's junior regulations.

Have fun!

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