

The Unwritten Rules of Soccer

THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF SOCCER

In addition to the formal rules of soccer, the “Laws of the Game,” there are the “Unwritten Rules of Soccer.” The unwritten rules of soccer represent an understanding by coaches and players regarding how to behave in a sportsmanlike manner that goes above and beyond the written rules. These include:

Honor the Game

It’s a privilege to be associated with the sport of soccer. Let all of your actions be guided by this.

Honor Your Commitment

Show up ready to play. Play competitively or for fun, but don’t quit on your coach or your teammates.

Respect your teammates, coaches, managers, trainers, administrators, agents, doctors, staff and all others associated with the sport.

It’s a rare case where someone isn’t trying to do their best.

Respect the Opponent

Without the opponent, there would be no game. Thank them after the match.

Respect the Referees

Without the referees, there would be no order. Thank them after the match.

Respect the Fans

Home or away, most spectators are knowledgeable and appreciate a competitive, sportsmanlike match, especially if they are paying to be there.

Play Fair

Players can play hard but must refrain from hurting or injuring opponents so that everyone can continue to enjoy playing the game (or to make a living). Abide by the Laws of the Game *and* their Spirit and Intent.

Don't Run Up the Score

Continuing to score goals against an inferior or demoralized opponent is inappropriate and unacceptable. Stop scoring in a game that has become a blow out; play possession.

No Demeaning Goal Celebrations

A brief act of exuberance demonstrated by a player or team just after scoring a goal is reasonable and acceptable. Players should engage in a celebration in an area away from opponents and do nothing by word or action that demeans the opponent in any way.

Lend a Hand

An act of sportsmanship is to assist a player, who has otherwise landed on or has been knocked to the ground, back to a standing position by offering a hand. Offer the hand in all sincerity. If it is not accepted, walk away. If it is accepted, be of true assistance.

Intentionally Put the Ball Out of Play Upon Serious Injury

To kick the ball out of bounds on purpose, so that an injured player may be attended to, is one of the highest demonstrations of sportsmanship in soccer. See a detailed explanation at www.CoachingAmericanSoccer.com, [Sportsmanship Upon Injury](#).

No Racism

Racism in any form, at any time, is unacceptable.

No Insulting or Demeaning Trash Talking

Let your play speak for itself.

No Cheating

If the goalkeeper has been beaten, you shall not grab the ball to keep it from going into the goal. No flopping. No punching the ball into the goal with your hand.

Look Sharp

If you wear jerseys designed to be tucked in, then keep them tucked in. Also, keep your shorts properly tied and your socks up.

No Demeaning Victory Celebration

A brief act of exuberance demonstrated by a team after winning a match is both reasonable and acceptable. Players should engage in a celebration in an area away from opponents and do nothing by word or action that demeans the opponent in any way. If you play for a team that allows a jersey swap after the match and you are approached to do so, take it as a sign of respect and swap accordingly.

Shake Hands

If the administrative pre-game activities provide for a “formal” handshake, do so with all opponents and the referees with sincerity. Make a point of trying to shake hands informally after a match.

Don’t Publicly Criticize

If you are a player or part of an organization in any capacity and you have a problem, keep it in-house and go through channels. If you can’t do this, then you have to leave. Otherwise, always give your best.

Soccer Coaching Tips

- Players take their keys on sportsmanship, and the “unwritten rules,” from the behavior of their coaches. Coaches must practice good sportsmanship and abide by the unwritten rules at all times. Further, coaches must not allow poor sportsmanship to go uncorrected.
- In a blow out, coaches and players alike need to be subtle about playing possession. Some youth leagues have written “blow out rules” that require players to be removed from the field based on goal differential.

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