

FAQ Regarding the Build Out Line in 9U and 10U

Why do we have this new rule?

The rule was adopted to enhance player development, especially of defensive players who will learn to build the attack from the defensive third.

What is the referee's role in handling the build out line?

The referee will (1) remind the players that they need to move back at the appropriate time, and (2) identify violations of the rule and stop play when necessary. (The best position for the referee on goal kicks and when the goalkeeper has the ball is near the build out line to encourage players back as needed.)

What if no build out line is marked?

If the build out line has not been marked on the field, the referees and coaches should work together to identify the location of the line in a safe fashion. This may include use of flat cones, flags (at least a yard off the touchline), tape on turf fields, or any other method that allows the players and referees to figure out where the line is. The line is to be located half the distance between the top of the penalty area and the halfway line. (When no line is present, referees should take care to apply the spirit of the game to any potential violations of the build out line.)

When do players have to go behind the build out line?

Opponents must retreat behind the build out line (1) when the goalkeeper obtains possession of the ball in his or her hands and (2) when a goal kick is being taken.

What about free kicks?

The build out line restrictions do not apply to free kicks.

When can the players cross back over the build out line?

When the goalkeeper has the ball, they may come back to challenge as soon as the goalkeeper releases the ball from his or her hands. On goal kicks, players may cross when the ball is kicked. (Note that this is different from the requirements as to when the ball is in play. On a goal kick the ball is not in play until it leaves the penalty area, but the opponents may cross the build out line as soon as the ball is kicked.)

Can an opponent of the kicker or goalkeeper be the first to touch the ball?

Yes.

Where can the players be on the team taking the goal kick or with goalkeeper possession?

Anywhere on the field. (But the goalkeeper's throw or roll or the goal kick may not be sent to a player who has crossed over the build out line.)

Does a goalkeeper or a team taking a goal kick have to wait for the other team to retreat behind the build out line?

No. The retreat behind the build out line is to ensure that a goalkeeper or team taking a goal kick has the opportunity to make a pass and start building up the attack. If they have an opportunity to do so before the team finishes retreating, they are free to do so immediately.

If the goalkeeper or the team taking the goal kick does take it before the opponents have retreated behind the build out line, can those opponents immediately get involved in play?

Yes. Just as when a team takes a quick free kick rather than waiting for opponents to be 10 yards away, a goal keeper or team taking a goal kick that does not wait for the opponents to retreat beyond the build out line does so at its own peril. Once the ball is kicked on the goal kick or released from the goalkeeper's hands, all build out line restrictions end, regardless of where the opponent was at the time of the kick or release.

Can the goalkeeper or player taking the goal kick send the ball anywhere on the field?

No. A goalkeeper throwing or rolling the ball must direct the ball goal side of the build out line. A goalkeeper may also place or drop the ball to the ground and kick the ball to a teammate goal side of the build out line. A player taking a goal kick must similarly direct the ball goal side of the build out line.

Can the goalkeeper punt as long as it is to someone goal side of the build out line?

No. Goalkeepers are not permitted to punt (or drop kick) the ball. The goalkeeper may throw the ball, roll the ball, or drop the ball and then pass it from the ground to a teammate goal side of the build out line. (If the goalkeeper dribbles the ball before passing it, the goalkeeper must still pass it to a player goal side of the build out line unless the goalkeeper first dribbles across the build out line.)

What happens if the goalkeeper does punt the ball?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team at the spot where the punt or drop kick took place. (Location is subject to the standard rule that indirect free kicks within the goal area are moved to the top of the goal area.)

What happens if the opposing team crosses the build out line too soon?

Encourage them to retreat, if no interference with play, continue with play. If necessary to stop play due to interference with play by this player, restart with a dropped ball to the goalkeeper.

What happens if the goal kick or goalkeeper throw/roll/pass crosses the build out line without being touched?

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team at the spot where the keeper was when the ball was thrown/rolled, or for a goal kick, the ball will be placed on the top of the goal area closest to where the goal kick was taken. However, if the ball was directed at a teammate who attempted to play the ball goal side of the build out line but missed the ball, the referee shall allow play to continue. Referees are asked to remember that the purpose of the rule is not to create a hyper-technical requirement, but to encourage development of players by encouraging them to learn to build out the attack from the defensive third.

How should the referee apply the 6 second rule for goalkeepers?

From a technical perspective, the 6 seconds should not begin until the opponents have crossed the build out line. (Referees are reminded that the best way to handle 6 seconds is to remind the keeper to release the ball. This offense should be called very rarely at this age, and only after a goalkeeper has been reminded to play the ball.)

How does the build out line affect offside?

The build out line is an offside line. An attacking player will not be considered to be in offside position if that player is between the build out line and the halfway line. (Put another way, for purposes of offside, the build out line is treated as the halfway line.)

Does that mean that assistant referees no longer need to worry about the second to last defender?

Absolutely not! Between the build out line and the goal line, offside remains exactly the same as it does at all levels of soccer.

So how does that affect where assistant referees should position themselves?

Assistant referees have the primary responsibility of monitoring offside. Just as at all levels, the assistant referees should be positioned on the line that marks where a player can be offside. As the build out line replaces the halfway line for purposes of offside, the assistant referee should be at whichever is closest to the goal line: the build out line, the second to last defender, or the ball.

But if the assistant referee stays back at the build out line, won't the assistant referee be too far from play in the other half of the field?

No. The assistant referee should continue to help the referee with out of play judgments along the entire touch line, as well as fouls the referee cannot see. There may be times that it is harder for the referee to see the flag because of the position farther back. If necessary, the assistant referee may, as appropriate, call the referees name or call out "flag" to get the referee's attention.

This seems to make it more complicated – why did they change offside like this?

These are small fields. The build out line forces the opposing team beyond the build out line. If offside is maintained at the halfway line as it is in higher levels, players would likely end up packed between the build out line and the half way line with no space to play the ball. As the purpose of the build out line is to develop skills, space is needed for the players. That space is created by using the build out line as an "offside line" so that attacking players can move into that space, which will bring defenders with them. Keeping offside past the build out line prevents cherry picking and helps introduce players to the concept of offside.

Do the coaches and referees understand all of this?

As with all changes, this is going to be a cooperative effort among the AYSO team – Parents, Coaches, and Referees. Referees and coaches are going to need to work together to help everyone, including the parents, understand the changes – and to understand that these changes are designed to improve the development of soccer players.

Together we can keep the game safe, fair, and fun – and let them play!