

FA Learning

A Guide to Assistant Referees



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Foreword and acknowledgement

Much advice has been offered to referees at various stages of development, from newly qualified officials through to the pinnacle, the international list recognised by FIFA.

In 1991 FIFA established an international list of specialists capable of assisting the referee in top-level matches. Later linesmen were renamed as assistant referees because of the increased duties assigned to the role. The Football Association recognises the importance of the increased role and considers it appropriate to offer some useful advice specifically targeted at assistant referees.

This guide should be of considerable benefit as it sets out, in simple terms, the important aspects of the role in supporting the referee in his increasingly difficult job.

The contributions of many colleagues involved in referee instruction are much appreciated and acknowledged on behalf of The Football Association.

The information in this booklet is provided as further advice for you to consider as you embark upon your career as a match official. Like refereeing, being an assistant referee can provide much enjoyment, satisfaction and healthy exercise. It also allows you to meet and make new friends among players, club officials and referees. You will be in good company. Thoroughly **enjoy** giving this extremely useful service to the game, for the benefit of the participants. Though it may not always appear to be the case, your contribution to the game **will** be appreciated.

Ian Blanchard

Head of National Referee Development

June 2008

Introduction

This booklet is for the guidance of referees in the early stages of their careers, who have gained the basic knowledge and skills to referee. They may be called upon to act as an assistant referee in County Cup Competitions, or local cup finals. They may, in the future, be elevated to the role of assistant referee on a more senior league.

It must be emphasised that much of the information contained within this booklet is applicable to assistant referees at all levels.

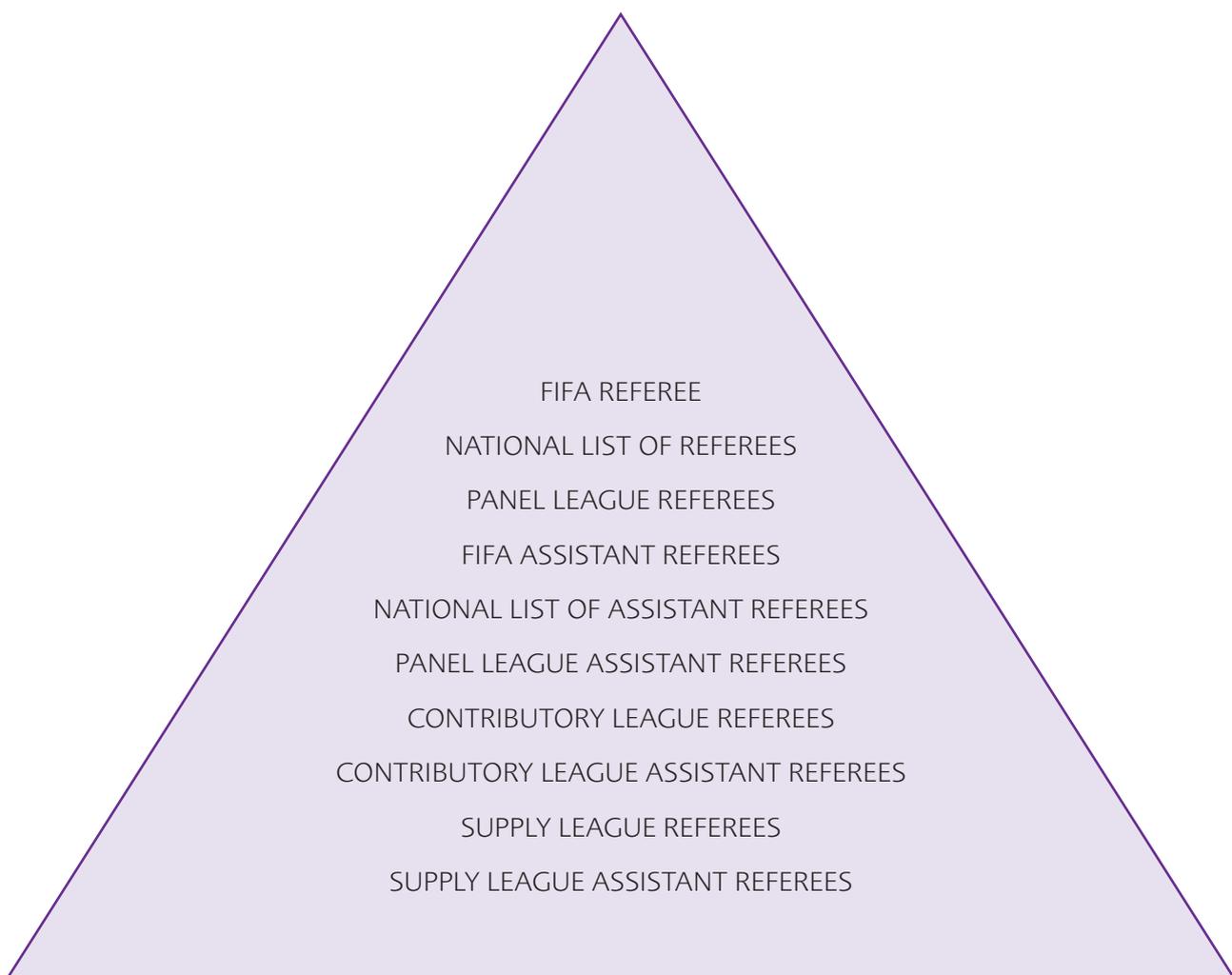
Referees are reminded that the Laws of Association Football give assistant referees specific responsibilities. Although any decision rests with the referee, the obligations of assistant referees are mandatory. Referees must control the match in co-operation with the assistant referees and, where applicable, with the fourth official. They should also act on the advice of assistant referees regarding incidents which they have not seen.

Assistant referees are reminded that their duties are specified in Law 6, and their responsibility includes absolute support for the referee, to assist with successfully controlling a game. In every match there will be many occasions when the assistant referees will be required to judge their level of involvement from the tolerance level set by the referee.

Concentration throughout the game is essential. Assistant referees must also be aware of the control being exercised by the referee and ensure that they offer support on match control either during or after the match. Opportunities should not be missed to evaluate performances on every occasion.

In refereeing circles one often hears the comment that acting as an assistant referee is much more difficult than refereeing. By noting the content of this booklet, not only will you gain enjoyment and satisfaction when fulfilling this important supportive role as an assistant referee, but you will also develop the necessary skills to perform successfully at whatever level you achieve.

The promotion pyramid



The Promotion Pyramid shows that there is a clearly defined pathway along which referees may move from the local leagues towards the FIFA lists. It is the usual practice for referees to operate at one level below which they function as an assistant referee, although this does not

always apply towards the upper levels of the pyramid. However, new referees are recommended to strive to move up the pyramid by working hard at their own present level before looking towards the next level that can be achieved. By working hard at developing their refereeing skills,

they will improve both their on and off field practices and thereby be better equipped to operate at a more senior level. In this way, referees will concentrate on the immediate task and will, therefore, prepare themselves thoroughly for the next stage in their careers.

Glossary of terms



Assistant Referee:

A qualified referee who has been appointed by a league or competition to perform an active role as an assistant to the referee from the commencement of the game.



Assistant Referee attached to a Club:

Does not have to be a qualified referee. However, in some cases he may be. The referee will base his response to such an official according to the level of experience of the assistant who may have received training in his county to fulfil this role.



Fourth Official:

A referee appointed by a league or competition, normally of equal qualification to that of the match referee, and who may take over either as the match referee or as an assistant referee, depending on the rules of the competition.

Fifth Official:

A referee appointed by a league or competition, normally of equal qualification to that of the match assistant referees, who may take over only as an assistant referee if either is unable to continue. This will depend on competition rules.

Responsibilities of an assistant referee

Off the Field of Play before the match

Physical Fitness

The Football Association booklet '*A Guide to Fitness for Referees*' offers general advice and guidelines on how to become fitter and better prepared, both physically and mentally, to officiate in the modern game. In the booklet you will find recommended training schedules applicable to the level at which you officiate. Whatever your level, your training programme should include sprinting and sideways running, as these elements are specific to your role as an assistant referee.

Fitness Training Leaders organise fitness training sessions throughout the country for the benefit of all referees. Why not find out by visiting The FA Website (www.TheFA.com) where the nearest supervised referee fitness training group is based and join them or call your County FA for information?

In service training

You are advised, having now qualified as a referee, to take every opportunity offered to develop the additional skills of being a successful assistant referee by attending all aspects of training and development

offered by the County Football Association, the Referees' Association or the Football Association Match Officials Association.

To enable referees to give full and comprehensive match instructions, they must be able to place themselves in the role of the assistant referee. Instructions must be clearly understood by the assistant referee.

Referees should be aware that the duties of assistant referees change and that current Law, interpretation and operating techniques are continually developing.

Referees should endeavour to obtain a balance of appointments as a referee and as an assistant in their formative years, in order to develop necessary skills in both capacities.

Attitude

At all times when acting as an assistant referee, it is essential that the role be approached with a positive frame of mind. Such an attitude, prior to the game, will give the match referee confidence in your ability to assist in successfully controlling the game.

Approaches to the game

Having received an appointment to officiate as an assistant referee and acknowledged the appointment to both the competition and home club, time may elapse before the game. You may have another match before the appointment just received. Concentration on the next match is very important. Do not allow yourself to become distracted by what may be an important future appointment as an assistant referee.

Should there be a time lapse before your game, be aware that one or both clubs may also be involved in a more senior competition (i.e. cup competition), and your game may not be played until a later date.

You may feel it appropriate at this time to reflect on previous experiences or games in which you have been involved, with the same colleagues.

If you find that you are appointed to two games in quick succession, please remember that each game is of equal importance and that a game acting as assistant referee requires both physical fitness and mental alertness. However, should you be unfortunate and

Responsibilities of an assistant referee

suffer a physical injury, it is always important to advise the competition at the earliest opportunity. It demonstrates your professional approach and gives the competition an opportunity to reappoint. If you are less than 100% fit it is being unfair to colleagues, the competition and yourself.

There may be occasions when you are called upon at short notice to replace an injured colleague. Your kit must always be in a state of readiness to allow you to undertake such appointments. If you have pre-packed, a final check of the contents before departure is essential. You should always carry a set of clean flags for use during the game.

In order to make a good impression when you arrive at the ground it is important that you wear suitable smart clothing.

The further you are travelling for your match the more likely you are to encounter weather or travel problems. There are numerous sources of information available to you via local press and traffic reports on the radio and on certain websites. Advance planning will help you to arrive in good time with your

mind set on the game. Try not to give yourself the worry of being late.

A point for consideration is that you may not be travelling from home, but perhaps from work and travel plans should bear this in mind. Any additional time you may need should be agreed in good time with work managers etc.

Some competitions specify joint travel arrangements for match officials and, therefore, these arrangements must be agreed in good time and backup arrangements made in case one or more officials fail to meet at the rendezvous.

You may find that competitions prescribe the minimum time that officials should report to the ground on match days so it is essential that you check the relevant Competition Rules. If no prescribed time exists in the Competition Rules, you should arrive at least 45 minutes prior to the advertised kick-off time.

On arrival at the ground, contact should be made with a representative of the home club, to announce your arrival.

Your next responsibility is to report to the referee whom you may find, on most occasions, will have arrived already as per Competition Rules.

Regardless of seniority or experience, you must always accept the relative roles of your colleagues on the day. Each has a specific role to play, the referee to lead the team, and the senior assistant referee to be aware of his additional responsibilities should the referee become incapacitated.

Assisting the referee starts early. Help to create a harmonious atmosphere and show a positive attitude to your position.

Respond to the attitude and atmosphere set by the referee in the dressing room.

Understanding pre-match instructions

At a suitable opportunity prior to the game the referee will issue you with pre-match instructions. This may take place either on the field of play or in the dressing room, depending on the referee's preference. It is essential that you give the referee your undivided attention and concentration. Always seek clarification of his requirements if

Responsibilities of an assistant referee

in doubt. Do not assume anything.

It is most likely that the flow of pre-match instructions will be broken by interruptions, so it is important that your train of thought is maintained.

Be mindful that instructions given by one referee may differ from those given by another. Your own pre-match instructions may also differ from those you receive. However, it is essential that you concentrate on implementing the instructions given by the referee of the day.

Although both assistant referees have received the same match instructions, your personal responsibility might differ under certain circumstances (e.g. control of the technical areas, supervising substitutions). Clarification should be sought from the referee if this is not covered in pre-match instructions.

If the result of the game is determined by kicks from the penalty mark, you should ensure that you clearly understand what the referee requires you to do should the situation arise.

On the Field of Play

Entering and leaving the field of play

When the match officials enter the field of play for the first time, players will form an impression of how they intend to approach the game. Ensure that the players are given a positive impression of your commitment. A clear indication of sound teamwork is shown when the match officials enter and leave the field of play together at both half-time and the conclusion of the game.

Entry onto the field of play should be in accordance with the referee's instructions and always in a dignified manner. The referee will usually require you to inspect the nets, be present to witness the pre-match ceremony and then to make your way quickly to your assigned patrol path.

It is especially important that assistant referees make their way to the referee at half-time and at the end of the game. It may assist the referee if more than one match official hears and records any comments that may be made by players at half-time or the conclusion of the game, or by members of the management team at the touchline.

Always refrain from passing comment on any aspect of the game, solicited or otherwise, until you have taken the opportunity to consult with the referee in the privacy of the match officials' dressing room.

Carry out pre-match instructions

Always remember that it is referees who are the leaders of the team on the day. It is your responsibility to respect his wishes and to carry out his instructions to the best of your ability.

Duties of an Assistant Referee

There are specific duties laid down in Law 6, to be carried out at all times. The referee may place greater emphasis on certain aspects in order to assist with effective match control in accordance with the Laws of Association Football.

Matchplay

From the moment the referee blows the whistle at the start of the match, it is essential that you maintain concentration at all times. You should always be aware of the position of the referee on the field of play so that you are able to make eye contact when necessary. When you need to, advise the referee of any infringement in Law and you should appreciate that

Responsibilities of an assistant referee

acknowledgement may take the form of either a whistle or a gesture of acceptance (or otherwise) by the referee.

There may be occasions when the referee does not immediately note your signal. In these circumstances one of two courses of action must be followed. If play develops in favour of the offending team you must maintain your signal. If, however, developments in play favour the team offended against, lower the flag as soon as this has happened and quickly regain your appropriate position.

It is important to understand that an assistant referee should reflect a profile similar to that of the referee. Try to adopt a low-key approach initially, but never miss the opportunity to be assertive when necessary. It is possible to be assertive without being aggressive, confrontational or provocative towards a player or club official.

There may be times when, because of your designated patrol path, you cannot move away from the source of confrontation. In these situations you may need to seek the assistance of the referee. However, there will usually be many opportunities to deal with

a challenge to your authority without reference to the referee. Possible responses will range from totally ignoring a remark, through quiet but firm approaches, to a warning that you will be left with no alternative but to involve the referee. You should never make a comment that may commit the referee to a particular course of action because this may put your colleague in an invidious position and cause unnecessary embarrassment.

There may be times when spectators make unwelcome comments. You should avoid even acknowledging that you have heard such comments, as this will probably provoke further comments, perhaps breaking your concentration. Undivided attention on what is going on in front of you is far more important than any unsolicited comments from behind you.

There may be times in the game when the action will remain in the other half of the field of play. At these times your concentration must be at its most intense. Therefore, you should be not only observing the action, but also scanning that part of the field of play for which you have a responsibility.

At all times it is important to ASSIST not INSIST.

Off the Field of Play after the match

In normal circumstances at the final whistle you should make your way swiftly to the referee, so that all three match officials leave the field of play together. There may be instances when remarks directed at one or more of the match officials may lead to a misconduct report. Under no circumstances should you make remarks or responses to comments from players, club officials and spectators nor should you attempt to discuss any aspect of the game with the referee until you have reached the security of the dressing room.

Once in the dressing room you may be invited by some referees to comment on their performance. He may also wish to discuss match incidents at an early stage. Contribute comments that are positive, constructive, and always honest. Carefully select the phrases that you use. Seek guidance from the referee concerning aspects of your performance and accept this in the spirit it is given.

Responsibilities of an assistant referee

You may feel it inappropriate to discuss match incidents immediately after the game, even when invited to do so by the referee. If at a later stage you wish to clarify these incidents, you should be honest and discuss them with the referee first, and not with other colleagues until later.

Remember that the referee on the day should be the only person to issue an invitation for anyone to enter the dressing room.

You may find, at some matches, that the match assessor makes contact with the referee to discuss the game and to offer advice to all match officials. If the assessor seeks clarification from you, give it clearly and concisely.

Occasionally, club officials may enter the dressing room at the invitation of the referee. Allow the referee to deal with these visitors and contribute to the discussion only when invited to do so by the referee.

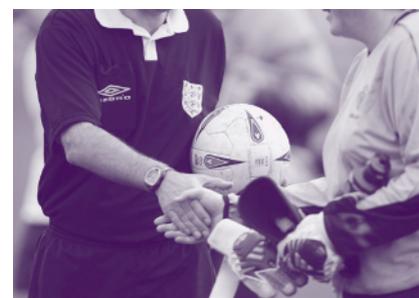
It is the usual practice for a home club official to pay your fees and expenses in the dressing room. Again the referee should handle this visitor. You will be given the opportunity to confirm that the payment is accurate.

Where appropriate, the referee may require your assistance to confirm details of misconduct and substitutions etc.

Be aware of any Competition Regulations regarding the accepting of hospitality after a match. Should hospitality be

extended to you, be aware of the consequences of mixing with players and club officials after the game, as your presence may create a difficult situation for you to control. You may feel it more appropriate to leave the ground immediately after showering and dressing.

All match officials should leave the vicinity of the ground simultaneously. Do not delay your departure from the car park.



Techniques of an assistant referee

Signalling

From the time you leave the dressing room the flag should remain unfurled.

In order to ensure that the referee can see your flag when necessary, keep the flag field side at all times. You must practise the passing of the flag from hand to hand at low level, to enable you to fulfil this requirement on match days.

When the ball goes out of play, either over the touchline or the goal line for which you have responsibility, you should signal to the referee as illustrated in the Laws of Association Football. However, there may be occasions when the referee of the day takes responsibility for signalling the direction for the restart and asks you only to signal that the ball has gone out of play and not the direction.

When it is necessary for you to raise the flag to draw the attention of the referee to an infringement in law, the flag should remain raised until the referee signals in acknowledgement. This acknowledgement will either take the form of the referee penalising the offence by blowing the whistle or a hand

signal for the play to continue. At this stage the flag should be lowered immediately. Should the referee not see the signal, it must be maintained until he does, or the pattern of play changes and the offended side gains an advantage.

However, if it was your intention to draw the attention of the referee to a serious offence, the flag should be maintained until such time as the referee acknowledges the signal. It may, however, be necessary for you to advise the referee of exactly what occurred should later clarification be sought from you. You should be able to inform the referee of the players involved and give a brief description of the incident.

All flag signals should be clear and not over demonstrative. You should refer to the illustrations in the Laws of Association Football. When you draw the referee's attention to unfair play, it may be necessary to slightly wave the flag to denote the severity of the offence. Under normal circumstances, a positive and authoritative signal is all that is required.

When indicating offside offences, or that a substitution is

proposed, use only the appropriate signals indicated in the Laws of Association Football.

An awareness of the position of the referee will enable you to achieve immediate eye-to-eye contact should your assistance be required.

There may be occasions when the referee acknowledges your signal but chooses not to act upon it. Under these circumstances you should lower your flag immediately, regain your position, and be ready for the next phase of play. Referees will normally only do this on occasions when, in their opinion, it will benefit the game. Such occasions could usefully be discussed in the dressing room to verify the circumstances. Do not allow it to affect your co-operation with the referee in the game.

In instances where you are about to indicate to the referee an infringement of law, take time to consider all aspects of emerging play before raising the flag. This is commonly referred to as 'thinking time', and can sometimes help to avoid play stopping unnecessarily, or denying possible advantage situations from developing.

Techniques of an assistant referee

The only signals that an assistant referee should use are those as approved by the International FA Board. It is not necessary for you to mime offences or give signals with the non-flagging hand. However, there will be occasions when your body movement, in addition to the approved signal, will confirm to the referee that the ball has gone out of play for a goal, goal kick or corner kick.

Positioning and Movement

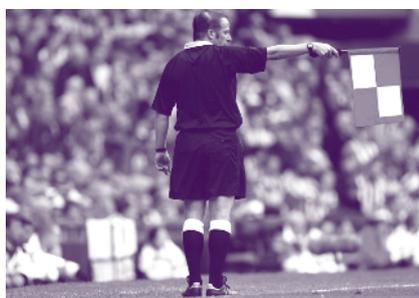
It is essential that, having completed the pre-match ceremony, you move onto the correct patrol path as indicated in the referee's pre-match instructions. In order that you are able to give accurate information to the referee from the start of play, you should take up a position in line with the second rearmost defending

player. The only times that you will vary from this position will have been detailed in the instructions of the referee and discussed in the dressing room prior to the start of the game.

Technical Area

The Technical Area has been defined so that team officials may offer advice to their own players. They should return to their place immediately afterwards. Different team officials may give tactical instructions during the match provided the person returns to the designated position after giving these instructions. It is the duty of the assistant referee closest to the Technical Area to ensure that it is used for that purpose only. As an assistant referee, you should use your management skills to ensure that

team officials comply with the spirit of the law. In the early stages of your career there may be no defined Technical Area but it is still your responsibility to ensure that the club representatives conduct themselves in an acceptable manner at all times.



Pre-match briefing

A referee will co-operate with the assistant referees on the following matters which will be discussed in a pre-match briefing:

- the time by the referee's watch;
- the side of the field which each assistant referee will take in each half of the match;
- duties prior to the commencement of the game, such as the examination of the appurtenances of the game;
- who shall be the senior assistant referee in case of need;
- the position to be taken for corner kicks;
- a sign to acknowledge an assistant referee's signal but elected not to act on it;
- which action at throw-ins shall be the responsibility of the assistant referee, and which will be that of the referee, e.g. many referees ask their assistant referees to watch for foot faults, whilst they look for the hand faults;
- requirements in terms of the assistant's advice on unfair play;
- requirements at penalty kicks;
- responsibilities to be taken for monitoring substitutions;
- liaison with fourth officials, where appropriate;
- emphasis on a clear, practical application of Law 11;
- who is to record information re misconduct, substitutions, etc.;
- when it may be necessary to consult with other members of the team;
- time signals;
- requirements when a confrontation takes place.

These instructions may vary in some Competitions where there are specific practices determined by those Competitions.

Referees should not necessarily keep to one diagonal of the field of play. If the state of the ground, wind, sun or other conditions demand a change to the opposite diagonal, a referee should indicate to the assistant referees his intention to make such a changeover, and the assistant referees will at once take over the other half of their particular lines. One advantage of such a change of diagonal is that the surface of the ground, next to the touchline, will be less severely worn because the whole length of the field will be utilised.

Other co-operative matters may be added, but it is important that the three officials should know each of these.

Self-evaluation

An opportunity may have presented itself either at half-time or after the game for you to discuss aspects of your performance with your colleagues. You should always view these opportunities as a positive contribution to your development as an assistant referee.

It may transpire that the referee may contact you at home when no suitable opportunity has presented itself on the day of the match. The referee may choose to review match incidents on a personal level, drawing your attention to various aspects of your performance that may benefit future performances.

However, this will not always happen, so you will have to rely on your personal reflections of the game in order to evaluate your performance. You should reflect on each performance by referring to this checklist.

Self-Evaluation List for Assistant Referees

Did I:

1. Thoroughly prepare myself for my role as an assistant referee?
2. Arrive at the ground at or before the prescribed time?
3. Ensure all my equipment including flags was clean and serviceable?
4. Adopt a friendly and fully co-operative attitude towards colleagues?
5. Listen carefully to the referee's pre-match instructions?
6. Clarify any uncertainties arising from the pre-match briefing?
7. Take all the necessary equipment with me onto the field of play?
8. Enter the field of play in a smart and confident manner?
9. Thoroughly carry out any pre-match duties required by the referee?
10. Take up the required position at the start of play?
11. Take up the appropriate position for corner kicks, goal kicks, throw-ins, penalty kicks?
12. Follow the ball towards the goal line at long range goal-scoring attempts or when long passes were made and move quickly to act as 'goal judge' when the need arose?
13. Remain alert to possible repositioning signals from the referee at certain restarts?
14. When a goal was scored, correctly proceed swiftly towards the halfway line, maintaining a clear view of subsequent developments?
15. Unless other duties required it, maintain my position in line with the second rearmost defending player?
16. Correctly judge offside offences?
17. Carry the flag unfurled and towards the field of play when I had no advice to offer to the referee?
18. Pass the flag from hand to hand before raising it in the air?
19. Avoid incorrect signalling technique, by ensuring the flag was in the correct hand before signalling?
20. Hold the flag aloft until the referee acknowledged my signal?

Self-evaluation

21. Use only the recommended flag signals?
22. Only use the flag when necessary?
23. Avoid using my free hand/arm as an indication to the referee?
24. Have an awareness of the referee's position at all times during the game so that eye contact was achieved when necessary?
25. Only signal when the referee was in a position to see and act upon it?
26. Remember not to anticipate the ball out of play and incorrectly signal?
27. Remember to confirm the time remaining with the referee if requested?
28. Communicate effectively with players to ensure their co-operation when appropriate?
29. Ensure that substitutions were carried out in accordance with law?
30. Effectively communicate with personnel in the Technical Area?
31. Avoid being distracted by remarks by spectators?
32. Communicate clearly with spectators to keep my touchline clear of obstructions throughout the game?
33. Accurately record match information as requested by the referee?
34. Convey concise and accurate information on incidents either at the request of the referee, whether they have been seen or unseen?
35. Adhere to the correct procedure when leaving the field of play?
36. Adopt a positive supportive attitude at all times during the game?
37. Take the opportunity to discuss aspects of my performance with the other members of the team?
38. Give accurate information confirming misconduct or match incidents to the referee in the dressing room at half-time or after the game?
39. Leave the ground feeling I had been totally supportive of the referee at all times?

You may like to keep an ongoing record of your personal responses by using the following evaluation guidelines. It is recommended that you create these grids on your personal computer to ensure that you have an ongoing detailed record of your self evaluation. This may be helpful when reflecting on your development with a mentor as well as helping you to pinpoint areas that you need to focus on in order to improve your skills as an assistant referee.

Sheet 1 – Strengths

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Sheet 2 – Shortcomings

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Publications

In addition to the Laws of the Game which The Football Association publishes annually, there are other booklets which you may find helpful in the early stages of your career as a referee.

[A Guide to Misconduct Report Writing](#)

This booklet is available from your County Football Association and offers you a great deal of practical advice which will help you to write any misconduct reports that have to be submitted.

[Advice for Newly Qualified Referees](#)

You may wish to refer to this booklet which offers you a great deal of practical advice and background information about refereeing.

[Advice on the Application of the Laws of the Game](#)

You may also find useful advice and information in this booklet.

[A Guide to Fitness for Referees](#)

A comprehensive guide offering advice on getting and keeping fit as well as helpful tips on diet and healthy eating.

[Player Management On-Line](#)

An interactive programme offering sound advice and guidance on managing players and situations both on and off the field.

Conclusion

The Laws of the Game and the decisions of the International FA Board cannot of themselves bring about the exemplary code of behaviour, which is so often referred to as "The Spirit of the Game". If football is to continue to be one of the greatest and most popular games in the world, then those who take part in it must maintain its great tradition. Everyone wishes to win and there is often much temptation to win at all costs, but truly sporting people can find small satisfaction in victory won by unfair means. The Spirit of the Law must be observed as well as the letter of the Law.

At the end of a match, having acted as an assistant referee, you can be drawn into unwise and unnecessarily prolonged discussion with club officials, managers, trainers, coaches and players, with regard to particular decisions or aspects of control. It is inappropriate for referees and assistant referees to become involved in detailed discussions at this time. Any observations made should be designed merely to illustrate clearly how an aspect of Law was interpreted and applied correctly. Your attention is drawn to these observations, with particular regard to the press and television reporters.

The Football Association, however, is always anxious to encourage the closest possible co-operation between club officials, managers, trainers, coaches, players and match officials. Discussion between these various parties on aspects of the Laws of the Game and their interpretations can only be for the benefit of football, if they take place at more appropriate times.



Further information

The following book, while focused on the Coach, contains excellent additional guidance that referees might use on self-reflection and self-evaluation techniques:

[Analysing your Coaching](#)

published by sports coach UK
available from
www.1st4sport.com or
0113-201 555

Notes

A Guide To Self-evaluation For
Football Referees

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LEARNING

A Guide to Assistant Referees