

Handball

This month, our focus is on Law 12 section 1, Handling the ball.

First let's look at the official IFAB wording. For the purposes of determining handball offences, the area considered hand/arm is from the fingertips to inline with the bottom of the armpit.

It is an offence if a player:

- **deliberately** touches the ball with their hand/arm, including moving the hand/arm towards the ball
- scores in the opponents' goal directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper
- touches the ball with their hand/arm when:
 - the hand/arm has made their body unnaturally bigger
 - the hand/arm is above/beyond their shoulder level (unless the player deliberately plays the ball which then touches their hand/arm)
- or, after the ball has touched their or a team-mate's hand/arm, *even if accidental*, immediately:
 - scores in the opponents' goal
 - creates a goal-scoring opportunity

The above offences apply even if the ball touches a player's hand/arm directly from the head or body (including the foot) of another player who is close.

Except for the above offences, it is **not** an offence if the ball touches a player's hand/arm:

- directly from the player's own head or body (including the foot)
- directly from the head or body (including the foot) of another player who is close
- if the hand/arm is close to the body and does not make the body unnaturally bigger
- when a player falls and the hand/arm is between the body and the ground to support the body, but not extended laterally or vertically away from the body

The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player **outside** the penalty area. If the goalkeeper handles the ball inside their penalty area when not permitted to do so, such as from a pass back, then an indirect free kick is awarded but there is no disciplinary sanction.

In simpler language, contrary to popular belief it is not an infraction any and every time a field player touches the ball with their hand or arm. The Law says that it is an offense if a player **DELIBERATELY** touches the ball with their hand/arm, including moving the hand/arm towards the ball. The keyword here is **DELIBERATELY**. If a player has a bad touch on the ball and it bounces up and touches their hand/arm, this is usually not an infraction. If a player moves their hands to protect their face or other body part and hits the ball, this is considered a DELIBERATE act and is a foul.

If a goalkeeper handles the ball outside of their penalty area, it is a foul and the sanction is a direct kick. Inside their penalty if a goalkeeper handles the ball when it is a PASS BACK or directly from a throw-in by their own team, the sanction is an indirect kick for the opposition.

There are some exceptions to these guidelines, even if the contact is *accidental*:

If a goal is scored or a goal-scoring opportunity develops immediately after the contact, if the hand/arm is out from the body making the body unnaturally bigger, or if the hand/arm is above/beyond shoulder level (unless the player deliberately plays the ball which then touches their hand/arm), it is a foul.

The sanction for a handling violation is a direct free kick by the opposition taken from the spot where the ball was handled. If the spot was inside the players own penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded to the opposition. If the spot was inside the opponent's goal area, the free kick may be taken from anywhere inside the goal area.

Goalkeepers:

Outside of their own penalty area have the same restrictions as field players.

Inside their own penalty area cannot touch the ball with their hands/arms:

If it was deliberately kicked to them (pass back) by a teammate

After releasing the ball before it is touched by another player

Directly from their own team's throw-in

The sanction for these three offenses is an indirect free kick