

# Tips for Volunteer Referees

Because there is an insufficient number of qualified referees available to officiate games in the East Lancashire Football Alliance all affiliated clubs have now been asked to be prepared to provide their own referees.

These useful tips have been provided by experienced grassroots referees and team managers and coaches who have already volunteered as a match referee. Bear in mind that some of these tips may be considered a little less relevant or important when officiating small-sided games in the U7-U10 age groups.

## Pre-match

- your kit & equipment:
  - you'll need a good whistle, a time-keeping device, Yellow/Red cards, pencil, note pad and flags
  - try to avoid wearing club colours and wear black kit, if possible
- engage with **team managers** – a friendly handshake can be well received. Ask them to remember and appreciate that you are not a qualified referee and have volunteered to do the job. Ask them to make sure:
  - **Respect guidelines** and **Codes of Conduct** are observed by players and supporters
  - **communications with players** (during the game) are always positive and kept to a minimum
- make sure each team has provided someone to run the line - decide what you want them to do and encourage them to communicate with you verbally during the game (a quick call of "Ref!" can be better than a call being missed)
- always do a quick **warm up**, even if it's just a light jog around the pitch – the older you are, the more important this might be!
- **inspect** the pitch and the nets – ask the home team to fix any problems
- check **players kit** - no metal studs or sharp edges, no jewellery
- organise a **Respect handshake** between the teams before kick-off

## Game Management

- be **mobile** and try to be **well positioned** – this is particularly helpful when making critical decisions
- be **confident, quick thinking** and **avoid hesitation** - but when making a critical decision **don't get flustered** or **hurried**
- be **calm** and **decisive** – without being officious
- stay **alert** and **focused** – maintaining **concentration** for the whole game is key
- don't be afraid of **making a mistake** – remember, everyone on the pitch can and will make a mistake
- use your **whistle effectively** and give good **clear hand signals**
- **communicate** with players during the game – but don't over-do it, players don't like opinionated referees
- take account of **ground / weather conditions** - understand how that affects the players and the game
- try to correctly **recognise players' actions** during the game and empathise with them, when appropriate
- respond to **changing patterns of play** and try to **gauge the mood** of players during a game
- **anticipate** players' positional intentions – and **try not to get in the way**
- **apply** the use of **the advantage** to suit the mood and temperature (or level) of the game – and be aware of the players' attitude to playing the advantage
- be prepared to **ask team captains** to speak with their players, if necessary
- if things get heated, **invite players to a neutral space** away from where an incident took place
- **understand** the laws of the game and sanctions - and apply them correctly
- **be prepared** to over-rule the linesperson, if necessary - but always thank them for their call
- **do not permit dissent** or any undue questioning of decisions from anyone – for players, an early warning is helpful before making use of the **sin bin**

Volunteers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the [IFAB Laws of the Game](#). For U7s - U10s the [FA Mini-Soccer & Futsal Handbook](#) is also an essential read.

Remember also that all Volunteer Referees carry the same authority as a qualified referee and are entitled to the appropriate fee should they wish to receive it.