

## U8-U12 Soccer Officiating Tips

For refereeing U12 soccer, prioritize making the game fun and safe by being encouraging, clear, and fair, rather than just enforcing every rule strictly. Focus on demonstrating knowledge of the game's fundamental laws, using clear and sharp whistle signals, and clear hand signals. Maintain good positioning to see the play, encourage players to spread out, and **be ready to gently instruct players on simple mistakes like offside or improper throw-ins, but avoid coaching.**

**Before the Game:** Thoroughly understand the basic rules and how to apply them at the U12 level.

**Meet with Coaches:** Introduce yourself, shake hands, and set clear expectations for behavior from players and spectators.

If working with assistant referees, discuss signals and any specific rules for the league.

### During the Game

- **Be a Game Leader:** Your goal is to ensure the kids have fun and are safe. Use common sense rather than strict enforcement of every rule.
- **Educate, Don't Just Correct:** Gently guide players who make simple mistakes like offside or incorrect throw-ins, and show them the proper technique.
- **Use Your Whistle:** Blow the whistle loudly and clearly to communicate control.
- **Use Clear Signals:** Make hand signals clear and point with a straight arm to show direction.
- **Manage Player Behavior:** Encourage players to spread out and play their positions, rather than all crowding the ball.
- **Be Aware of Positioning:** Stay on top of the play and maintain good positioning on the field so you can make accurate calls.
- **Stay Calm and Neutral:** Do not get into long conversations with a single coach, as this can give an impression of partiality. If comments from the sidelines affect the players, tell the coaches to get them to stop.

### After the Game

- **Learn from Experience:** Watch other referees, ask questions, and learn from your mistakes to improve your skills.
- **Maintain Professionalism:** Look and act sharp, and maintain a confident demeanor to gain respect.