Short and Simple Soccer Rules You Need to Know as a Parent

1. No Hands, please

You aren't supposed to use your hands unless you're the goalie.
A couple of points to clarify.

First, the rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder.

Second, the proper way to look at this soccer rule is that a player cannot "handle" the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player's hand or arm is not a hand ball. This means that the referee must use his or her own judgment to some extent in determining whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or a purposeful attempt to gain an advantage.

Believe it or not, there is also a situation in which the goalie cannot use his/her hands. This is sometimes called the back-pass rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a pass that came directly from one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper must use his feet. Infraction of this soccer rule will result in an indirect kick from the point of the infraction.

2. Throw-ins

A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head.

For teaching purposes it is common to allow players under the age of 8 to take more than 1 attempt.

3. Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks

A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across the endline – you know, the end of the field.

If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick.

The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the "goalie box" as it is affectionately called. It can be taken by any player, not just the goalkeeper.

The corner kick is taken from the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.

4. Fouls

A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent.

Soccer can be a physical, contact sport when two opposing players both want the soccer ball

What you need to know as a parent is that bumping or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is not a foul until the hands or elbows come up. This is a bit of a judgment call and not all referees will call it the same way. Some soccer rules are actually not black-and-white.

5. Direct and Indirect Free Kicks

The simple difference between the two is this: On a direct kick you can score by kicking the ball directly into the goal. On an indirect kick you cannot score. An indirect kick must be touched by another player before it can go into the goal – that is the kicker and a second person.

As a parent on the sideline, you can tell whether the kick is direct or indirect by looking at the referee. For an indirect kick, the referee will hold one arm straight up in the air until the second person touches the ball. No arm up, it's a direct kick. There are many soccer rules around what causes a direct or indirect kick.
In general, a direct kick comes from a contact foul or hand ball. Everything else is indirect.

6. Penalty Kick

A penalty kick results from a contact foul or hand ball by the defending team within the penalty area – the large box on either end of the field. So it's a type of direct kick also.

The ball is placed on the penalty spot.

All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked. If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the goal or the keeper and stays on the field, the ball is "live" and anyone can play it.

7. Two-touch Rule

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will see this called many times in youth soccer. It applies everywhere. You will see it frequently on kick-offs or direct and indirect kicks. If a kid barely hits the ball and decides to take another swipe at it, that is a two-touch.

This also applies to throw-ins. A kid cannot throw the ball in and then kick it. Nope. No way. No can do.