



# RETREATING LINE

  
NEW ZEALAND  
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# RETREATING LINE INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed to help all clubs, coaches, club based referees, parents and players, who are participating in football games utilising the Retreating Line.

You will find the rules and regulations as well as the pitch set-up required to successfully organize a game day for players participating in either 7v7 or 9v9 formats.

This coaching tool has been successfully implemented in Junior Football throughout the world. It has also been used successfully by Federations in New Zealand over the past few years.

The Retreating Line rule enables and encourages our young footballers to start to develop and enjoy a style of play in keeping with Worlds best practice and New Zealand Football's playing philosophy.

*"A proactive, effective, controlled and incisive possession-based style of attacking play using individual and combination play to create and score goals."*

*Underpinned by a quick transition mentality and defending through aggressive, collective, intelligent pressing.*

*The point of difference is our superior team culture and traditional Kiwi strengths combined with astute tactical cohesion."*



# RETREATING LINE

The rule will create more opportunities for players to:

- build attacking play from the back by playing out from the goalkeeper
- recognise opportunities to play through the thirds
- identify movements to receive and play between opposition units
- learn effective ways to press from the front
- be educated in the offside rule and learn how to time forwards runs

The implemented rule has met with fantastic feedback from players, coaches, spectators and parents alike. The Retreating Line helps create a game which is enjoyable to play, watch and coach.

New Zealand Football and the regional Member Federations are delighted to work with you in helping to drive forward the game, as well as help to develop players for the modern game.



## RESULTS

### PLAYING THROUGH THE THIRDS OF THE PITCH



Only 20% of all long kicks from Goalkeepers were successful, resulting in a team mate in controlled possession in middle 1/3 of the pitch



An increase in controlled possession in midfield areas occurred after playing out from the back using shorter passes, up to 52%



There was an increase in playing out from the back when the Retreating Line was in place, from 23% to 76%

### REGAINING DEFENSIVE POSITION



Teams are more likely to regain defensive positions with a retreating line in place (94%), as opposed to without (77%)

### COACH AND PLAYER FEEDBACK



% thought the rule had a positive impact on the game



% stated the rule was easy for coaches to understand



% stated the rule was easy for players to understand



% said the rule had a positive impact on their team's playing style when in possession



% said the rule had a positive impact on their team's playing style when out of possession

## RETREATING LINE PILOT

During the winter season, 75 registered football teams, aged between 9 and 12 years took part in a Retreating Line pilot in New Zealand. This took part across the course of the season, with information being recorded in two forms:

- Filming and analysis of games with half of them employing the Retreating Line and half of them not, allowing for a clear comparison in the relevant focus areas, providing quantitative information for review.
- A survey of all coaches involved, questioning the understanding, relevance, impact and implementation of the Retreating Line rule.

# RETREATING LINE RULE

The Retreating Line rule is a simple one for players and coaches to understand, and also to implement. Over the next two pages the rule is explained for 7v7 & 9v9 formats, with also helpful hints for coaches to help ensure that it is fully effective.

## PLAYING OUT FROM THE BACK

When a team's goalkeeper has the ball in their hands, is taking a goal kick or any player taking a Free Kick, the opposition team must drop back behind the retreating line.

Only after the goalkeeper plays the ball out and a team-mate touches the ball, can the opposition players advance over the retreating line.

If the Goalkeeper plays the ball over the Retreating Line, the game continues as normal.

### HINT FOR COACHES

The team mate receiving the ball from the GK should be encouraged to take their first touch as quickly as possible.

If a defending player advances beyond the retreating line before the opponent has touched the ball (from GK pass), or fails to drop behind the line, the referee will award an indirect free kick on the Retreating Line.

### HINT FOR COACHES

The defending team should be encouraged by their coach to drop back behind the Retreating Line when the opposition GK has the ball or at a free kick, and to wait for the opponent's first touch before starting to press.



## THE OFFSIDE RULE

In 7v7 formats, the Retreating Line is used for offside, rather than the halfway line. This allows junior footballers to have the required space to play in when in possession, whilst also providing a basic introduction to the offside rule.

The attacking player (Blue) is **ONSIDE** when receiving a pass from a team-mate in a position before the defending team's retreating line, even if he is beyond the last defenders. This is at the moment the ball is played by one of his team mates.

### HINT FOR COACHES

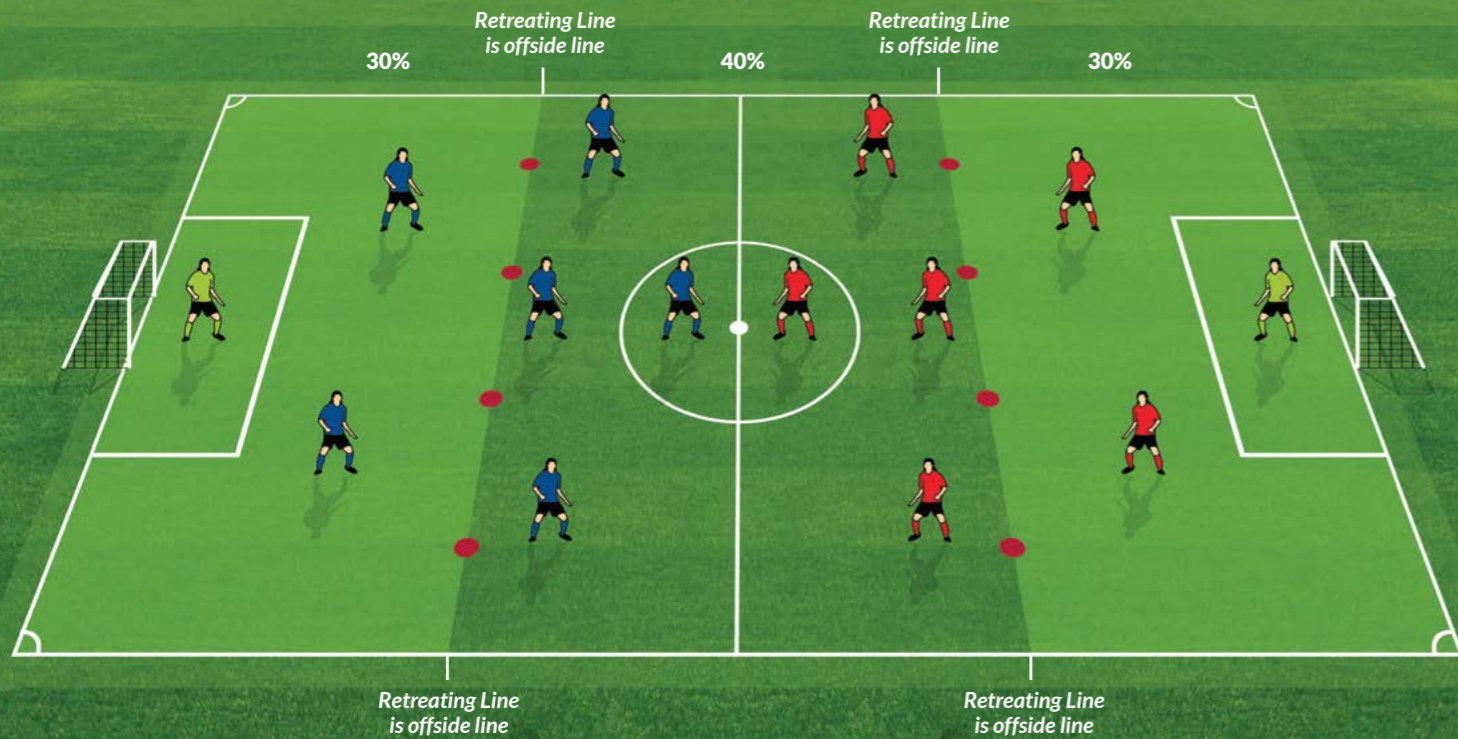
Coaches are asked to assist forwards with picking up realistic starting positions related to the defenders position rather than just standing near to the retreating line, behind defenders. This will help their overall development.



For 9v9 formats, the half way line becomes the offside line. This will help prepare players for the full sided game at youth ages. This is illustrated in the diagrams on Page 9.

## 7v7 PITCH DIMENSIONS

Below are the pitch dimensions for U9 & U10 age groups. Pitches are always marked with the retreating lines as 30% - 40% - 30% of all sized pitches. The retreating line can be marked using spot markers across the pitch but can also be complemented with poles or high cones on the sides of the pitch.



Pitch Dimensions:  
**Maximum: 55m x 35m | Minimum: 45m x 30m**

Goal Box Dimensions:  
**8m x 16m**

Retreating Line distance from Goal:  
**30% of the pitch**

*Note: Retreating Line distance changes with field length*

## 9 v 9 PITCH DIMENSIONS

Below are the pitch dimensions for U11 & U12 age groups.



Pitch Dimensions:  
**Maximum: 70m x 50m | Minimum: 64m x 45m**

Goal Box Dimensions:  
**10m x 24m**

Retreating Line distance from Goal:  
**30% of the pitch**

*Note: Retreating Line distance changes with field length*

## NATIONAL PLAYING RULES 4 - 6 YEAR OLDS



### PLAYING FORMATS

Number of Players	3v3 or 4v4	
Game Duration	30 mins maximum	2x15 mins 3x10 mins
Pitch Dimensions	Minimum	20x15m (3v3)
	Maximum	30x20m (4v4)
Goals	Minimum	1.5x1m
	Maximum	2x1m
Ball	Size 3	
Penalty Area	No penalty area required	
Goalkeepers	No GKs at this age	
Substitutions	Maximum of 2 substitutes who may rotate regularly throughout the game	

### START AND RESTART OF PLAY

A game is started with a kick to a team mate from the middle of the halfway line. The opposition must be 5m away from the ball at this time. In order to score a goal from kick off it must touch someone else on the field before entering the goal. When a goal is scored, play is restarted at the halfway line with the side conceding the goal taking the kick off as per the start of play.

### SCORING GOALS

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. Goals can only be scored from the opposition's half as there are no goal keepers.

### OFFSIDE

There is no offside rule in First Kicks. Players should be discouraged from permanently standing in blatant offside positions.

### BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

There are no throw ins. The ball is to be kicked or dribbled into play from behind the touchline. To ensure players have as much contact with the ball as possible, players have approximately three seconds to recommence the play from a restart.

The defending team should be retreat to 5m away from the ball until play is restarted. The ball must touch someone else on the field before a goal can be scored.

### BALL CROSSING THE GOAL LINE

There are no corner kicks. Regardless of which team touched the ball last, a player from the team whose goal line the ball has crossed will place the ball anywhere along the goal line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must retreat to the half way line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch someone else on the field before a goal can be scored.

### FOULS & MISCONDUCT

Most acts of handball or fouls and misconduct at this level are caused by accident and with little to no intent. In this case try and give the advantage to the attacking team and continue play. If you decide a deliberate or serious act of handball, foul or misconduct has occurred, explain to the child how they have broken the rules and that they should try not do this again.

Indirect free kicks are awarded for acts of handball or fouls and misconduct (An indirect free kick is where a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal). Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball when the indirect free kick is taken.

### MATCH RESULTS AND LADDERS

Published match results, ladders and tables are not applicable at First Kicks. Under no circumstances will match results be published publically by Member Federations, Local Associations or local clubs.

## NATIONAL PLAYING RULES 7 - 8 YEAR OLDS



### PLAYING FORMATS

Number of Players	4v4 or 5v5	
Game Duration	40 mins maximum	2x20 mins 4x10 mins
Pitch Dimensions	Minimum	20x15m (3v3)
	Maximum	30x20m (4v4)
Goals	2x1m	1.5x1m
Ball	Size 3	
Penalty Area	No penalty area required	
Goalkeepers	No GKs at this age	
Substitutions	Maximum of 2 substitutes who may rotate regularly throughout the game	

### START AND RESTART OF PLAY

A game is started with a kick to a team mate from the middle of the halfway line. The opposition must be 5m away from the ball at this time. In order to score a goal from kick off it must touch someone else on the field before entering the goal. When a goal is scored, play is restarted at the halfway line with the side conceding the goal taking the kick off as per the start of play.

### SCORING GOALS

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line. Goals can only be scored from the opposition's half as there are no goal keepers.

### OFFSIDE

There is no offside rule in Fun Football. Players should be discouraged from permanently standing in blatant offside positions.

### BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

There are no throw ins. The ball is to be kicked or dribbled into play from behind the touchline. To ensure players have as much contact with the ball as possible, players have approximately three seconds to recommence the play from a restart.

The defending team should be retreat to 5m away from the ball until play is restarted. The ball must touch someone else on the field before a goal can be scored.

### BALL CROSSING THE GOAL LINE

There are no corner kicks. Regardless of which team touched the ball last, a player from the team whose goal line the ball has crossed will place the ball anywhere along the goal line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must retreat to the half way line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch someone else on the field before a goal can be scored.

### FOULS & MISCONDUCT

Most acts of handball or fouls and misconduct at this level are caused by accident and with little intent. In this case try and give the advantage to the attacking team and continue play. If you decide a deliberate or serious act of handball, foul or misconduct has occurred, explain to the child how they have broken the rules and that they should try not do this again.

Indirect free kicks are awarded for acts of handball or fouls and misconduct (An indirect free kick is where a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal). Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball when the indirect free kick is taken.

### MATCH RESULTS AND LADDERS

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# RETREATING LINE RULES 9 - 10 YEAR OLDS



## PLAYING FORMATS

Number of Players	7v7	
Game Duration	50 mins maximum	2x25 mins
Pitch Dimensions	Minimum	45x30m
	Maximum	55x35m
Goals	Minimum	3.8x1.9m
	Maximum	4x2m
Ball	Size 4	
Penalty Area	8x16m	
Goalkeepers	Yes	
Substitutions	Maximum of 3 substitutes who may rotate regularly throughout the game	

## START AND RESTART OF PLAY

A game is started with a kick to a team mate from the middle of the halfway line. The opposition must be 5m away from the ball at this time. In order to score a goal from kick off it must touch someone else on the field before entering the goal. When a goal is scored, play is restarted at the halfway line with the side conceding the goal taking the kick off as per the start of play.

## SCORING GOALS

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line.

## RETREATING LINE

When a team's goalkeeper catches/picks up the ball or is taking a goal kick or any player taking a Free Kick, the opposition MUST drop back behind the retreating line.

Only after the goalkeeper plays the ball out and one of the goalkeeper's team-mates touches the ball, can the opposition player advance over the retreating line.

Coaches are asked to encourage all players to play the ball as quickly as possible from the goal keeper and not to allow the ball to continue to roll or come to a stop.

## OFFSIDE

The offside rule is applied in Mini Football. For 9th & 10th Grade Football, the offside law will be applied between the retreating line and goal line only.

A player is in an offside position if they are nearer to the opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent (at the point the ball is passed to them).

## BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

Throw in. The ball should be thrown in to play from behind the touch line. The player should face the field of play with both feet either behind or on the touchline. Players must use both hands to deliver the ball from behind and over their head. The thrower may not touch the ball until it has touched another player and if this occurs an indirect free kick is awarded. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw in.

## BALL CROSSING THE GOAL LINE

Last touched by defending team – A corner kick is awarded.  
Last touched by attacking team – Goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area. Opponents retreat to the Retreating Line.

## GOALKEEPERS

The goalkeeper is allowed to handle the ball anywhere in the penalty area. To restart play after a save or gathering the ball with their hands, the ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet, within 6 seconds. The goalkeeper is not allowed to kick or drop kick the ball directly from their hands.

An indirect free kick is awarded if the goalkeeper touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a team mate.

## FOULS & MISCONDUCT

There are only indirect free kicks for fouls and misconducts with the exception of penalty kicks. Opponents must be at least 5 metres away from the ball when the indirect free kick is taken. Free Kicks occur when a player:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempt to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Tackles an opponent from behind to gain possession of the ball
- Making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately
- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of a player

A deliberate handball or serious misconduct in the penalty area results in a penalty kick which is taken from 7m out with a GK in position.

## MATCH RESULTS AND LADDERS

Published match results, ladders and tables are not applicable at Mini Football. Under no circumstances will match results be published publically by Member Federations, Local Associations or local clubs.

The recording of match results can be conducted for the purpose of assigning teams appropriate levels of competitive games, ensuring the most enjoyable experience for all players.

# RETREATING LINE RULES 11 - 12 YEAR OLDS



## PLAYING FORMATS

Number of Players	9v9	
Game Duration	60 mins maximum	2x30 mins
Pitch Dimensions	Minimum	64x45m
	Maximum	70x50m
Goals	Minimum	4x2m
	Maximum	5x2m
Ball	Size 4	
Penalty Area	10x24m	
Goalkeepers	Yes	
Substitutions	Maximum of 4 substitutes who may rotate regularly throughout the game	

## START AND RESTART OF PLAY

A game is started with a kick to a team mate from the middle of the halfway line. The opposition must be 5m away from the ball at this time. In order to score a goal from kick off it must touch someone else on the field before entering the goal. When a goal is scored, play is restarted at the halfway line with the side conceding the goal taking the kick off as per the start of play.

## SCORING GOALS

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the line.

## RETREATING LINE

When a team's goalkeeper catches/picks up the ball or is taking a goal kick or any player taking a Free Kick, the opposition MUST drop back behind the retreating line.

Only after the goalkeeper plays the ball out and one of the goalkeeper's team-mates touches the ball, can the opposition player advance over the retreating line.

Coaches are asked to encourage all players to play the ball as quickly as possible from the goal keeper and not to allow the ball to continue to roll or come to a stop.

## OFFSIDE

The offside rule is applied in Mini Football. For 11th & 12th Grade Football, offside cannot be given if the player is in their own half of the field of play.

A player is in an offside position if they are nearer to the opponents' goal line than both the both and the second last opponent (at the point the ball is passed to them).

## BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

Throw in. The ball should be thrown in to play from behind the touch line. The player should face the field of play with both feet either behind or on the touchline and should use both hands to deliver the ball from behind and over their head. The thrower may not touch the ball until it has touched another player and if this occurs an indirect free kick is awarded. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw in.

## BALL CROSSING THE GOAL LINE

Last touched by defending team – A corner kick is awarded.  
Last touched by attacking team – Goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area. Opponents retreat to the Retreating Line.

## GOALKEEPERS

The goalkeeper is allowed to handle the ball anywhere in the penalty area. To restart play after a save or gathering the ball with their hands, the ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet, within 6 seconds. The goalkeeper is not allowed to kick or drop kick the ball directly from their hands.

An indirect free kick is awarded if the goalkeeper touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a team mate.

## FOULS & MISCONDUCT

There are only indirect free kicks for fouls and misconducts with the exception of penalty kicks. Opponents must be at least 5 metres away from the ball when the indirect free kick is taken. Free Kicks occur when a player:

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- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempt to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Tackles an opponent from behind to gain possession of the ball
- Making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately
- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of a player

A deliberate handball or serious misconduct in the penalty area results in a penalty kick which is taken from 8m out with a GK in position.

## MATCH RESULTS AND LADDERS

Published match results, ladders and tables are not applicable at Mini Football. Under no circumstances will match results be published publically by Member Federations, Local Associations or local clubs.

The recording of match results can be conducted for the purpose of assigning teams appropriate levels of competitive games, ensuring the most enjoyable experience for all players.





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