

The Rules of Football

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael



Dedication

This publication is dedicated to the thousands of players who have made the G.A.A. the important organisation it is today.

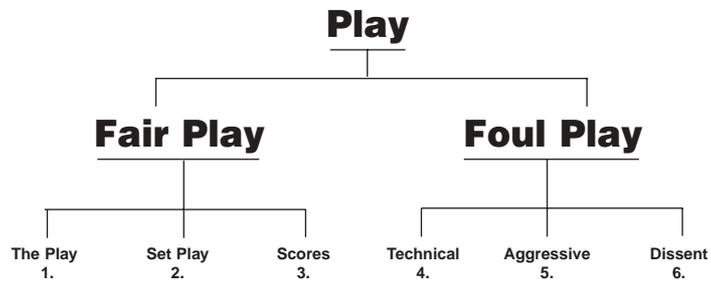
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Playing Rules supersedes all previous publications.



The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football

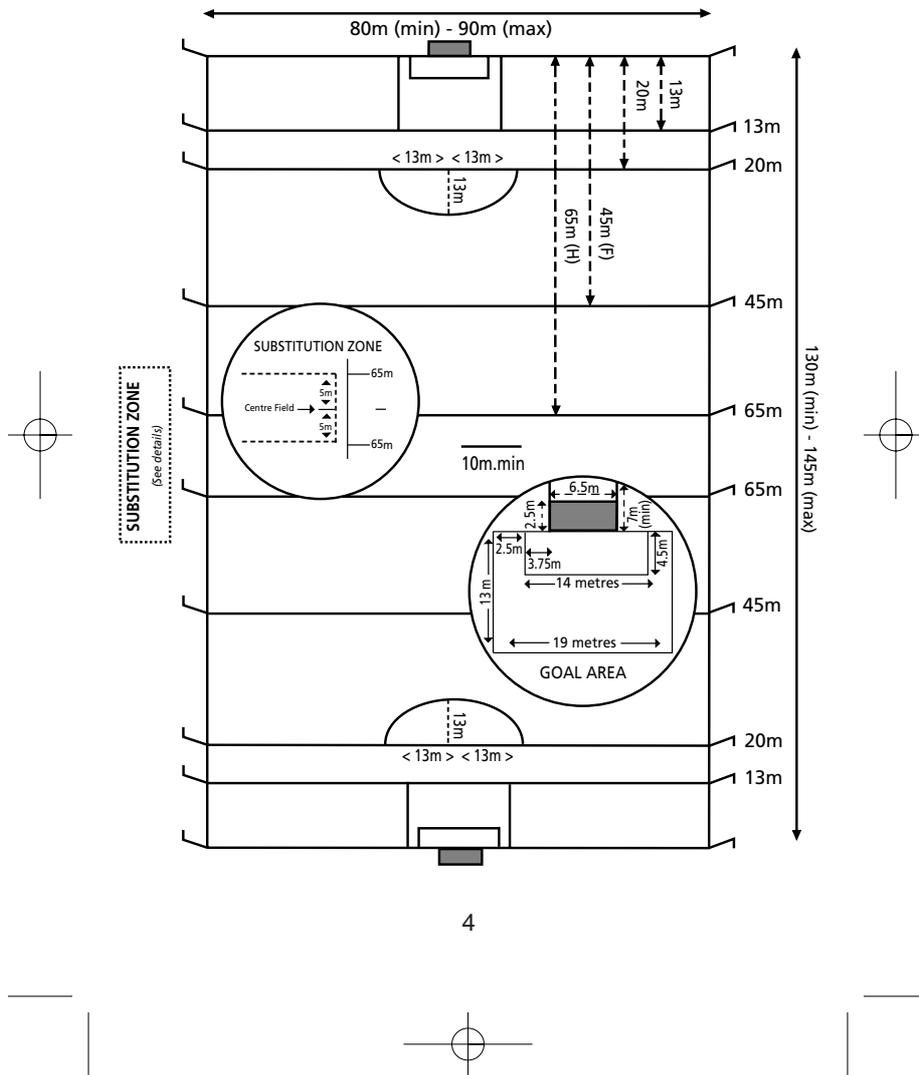


From THE OFFICIAL GUIDE 2001

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The Field of Play For Hurling and Gaelic Football



Introduction

This booklet contains an official copy of the playing rules of Gaelic Football and the definitions of important terms taken from the Official Guide. Its aim is to try to ensure that all players, spectators and commentators read and learn the rules and definitions of the terms used in the rules.

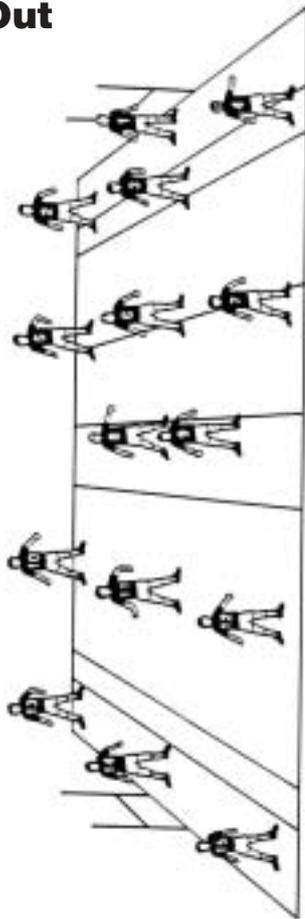
It is important that teachers and coaches ensure that all their players have a copy of this booklet, and that they study it carefully. This will improve their understanding of the game, and help them to accept the decisions of the officials without dissent.

A thorough knowledge of the rules enables players and teams to become more efficient and successful, and to get greater satisfaction from playing. Moreover, when spectators are also fully conversant with the rules, they will enjoy their games better because they will have a better understanding and appreciation of refereeing decisions.

It is important to remember that the definitions of terms are an integral part of the playing rules. When these definitions are clearly understood by all concerned, we can expect a much higher consistency in decision making by match officials because each term has only one possible meaning.

This booklet emphasises the importance which the Association places on promoting a better understanding of our games which are part of our national culture by presenting the playing rules in a way which is easy to read, remember and apply.

Line Out



The Rules of Football

Rules of Fair Play

RULE 1 - THE PLAY

- 1.1 The ball is in play once it has been thrown in or kicked after the referee has given a signal to start or restart play, and it remains in play until:
- (a) the referee signals a stop;
 - (b) the ball has passed completely over any boundary line or strikes any flag marking the boundary lines;
 - (c) the ball has been prevented from going over any boundary line or is touched in play by anyone other than a player.

- 1.2 When the ball is on the ground, it may be played by any part of the body except the hand(s). It may be lifted off the ground with the feet.

EXCEPTIONS

- (i) The goalkeeper may play the ball on the ground with his hand(s) inside his own small rectangle.
- (ii) Any player who falls or is knocked to the ground while in possession of the ball may fist or palm the ball away on the ground, and may score by so doing.
- (iii) The ball may not be lifted off the ground with the knees.

- 1.3 When the ball is not on the ground, it may be played by any part of the body.
- 1.4 When a player is in possession of the ball, it may be:-
- (a) carried for a maximum of four consecutive steps or held in the hand(s) for no longer than the time needed to take four steps;
 - (b) played from the foot to the hand(s) -toe-tapped.
 - (c) bounced once, and once after each toe-tap;
 - (d) changed from one hand to the other once, with the original holding hand maintaining contact until the change is completed;
 - (e) struck with the open hand(s) or fist, provided there is a definite striking action;
 - (f) tossed for a kick, a toe-tap or a pass with the hand(s).

The ball may be knocked from an opponent's hand(s) by flicking it with the open hand.

- 1.5 When the ball has not been caught, it may be bounced more than once in succession.
- 1.6 Player(s) may tackle an opponent for the ball.
- 1.7 Provided he has at least one foot on the ground, a player may make a side-to-side charge on an opponent:-
- (a) who is in possession of the ball, or
 - (b) who is playing the ball, or
 - (c) when both players are moving in the direction of the ball to play it.

When he is within the small rectangle, the goalkeeper may not be charged but he may be challenged for possession of the ball, and his kick or pass may be blocked. Incidental contact with the goalkeeper while playing the ball is permitted.

- 1.8 A goalkeeper may move along his goal-line when a penalty kick is being taken.
- 1.9 For a run-up to a free kick, side-line kick or kick-out, a player may go outside a boundary line, otherwise players shall remain within the field of play.
- 1.10 A player may hold up his hands to intercept a free kick.

RULE 2 - SET PLAY

- 2.1 The referee, facing the players, starts the game and restarts it after half-time, by throwing in the ball between two players from each team, who shall stand one behind the other in their own defensive sides of the half-way line. All other players shall be in their respective positions behind the 45m lines.
- 2.2 After a foul, play is restarted by a free kick or a throw-in where the foul(s) occurred.

EXCEPTIONS

- (i) In the case of fouls by a defending player within the rectangles, the following shall apply;
- A penalty kick shall be awarded for an Aggressive Foul within the large rectangle or any foul within the small rectangle. The penalty kick shall be taken from the ground at the centre point of the 13m line. A free kick from the centre of the 13m line shall be awarded for a Technical Foul by a defending player within the large rectangle but outside the small rectangle.
- (ii) A free kick awarded for a foul by a defending player inside his own 13m line but outside the large rectangle shall be taken from the 13m line opposite where the foul occurred.

(iii) When a player is fouled immediately after he plays the ball away and a score results, it shall stand. Otherwise, the referee shall award a free kick from where the foul occurred or, if more advantageous, from where the ball lands or crosses the sideline. With the option of a free being awarded from where the foul occurred being retained, the rule shall apply in the following circumstances as outlined:-

- (a) If the ball lands over the end-line, the free kick shall be given on the 13m line opposite the place where the ball crossed the end-line,
- (b) if the ball lands inside the opponents' 13m line, a free kick shall be given from the 13m opposite the place where the ball crossed this line.

(iv) Where otherwise specified in the penalties listed in Rule 4 Sections 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and Rule 6.2.

(v) When play is restarted by throwing in the ball after a foul(s) between the end-line and the 20m line, the throw-in shall be given on the 20m line opposite where the foul(s) occurred.

All players except the player taking the free kick shall be at least 13m from where the free kick is awarded, or, all players

except those two contesting the throw-in shall be at least 13m from where the throw-in is awarded.

2.3 A penalty kick shall be taken from the ground at the centre point of the 13m line, and only the defending goalkeeper may stand on the goal-line. All other players, with the exception of the player taking the kick, shall be outside the 20m line, and the arc, be at least 13m from the ball, and shall not cross the 20m line or the arc until the ball has been kicked. The goalkeeper may move along his line, but may not advance from the goal-line until the ball has been kicked. If a defending player fouls before the ball is kicked and a goal does not result, the referee shall allow the penalty kick to be retaken.

2.4 When opposing players foul simultaneously, play is restarted by throwing in the ball.

2.5 A free-kick, other than a penalty-kick, may be taken from the hands or from the ground. A player having indicated his option to the referee shall not be permitted to change his decision. The ball shall be stationary when a free kick is taken from the ground.

2.6 With the referee's consent, a free kick may be taken immediately.

EXCEPTIONS

A penalty kick and a free kick awarded to a team from their opponents' 13m line.

- 2.7 (a) When the ball is played over the end-line by the team attacking that end, play is restarted by a kick-out off the ground from within the small rectangle. The player taking a kick-out may kick the ball more than once before any other player touches it, but may not take the ball into his hand(s). If the goalkeeper is not taking the kick-out, he shall stay in the small rectangle, and all other players except the player taking the kick-out shall be outside the 20m line until the ball has been kicked. The ball shall travel 13m before being played by another player of the defending team.
- (b) After a score, the kick-out shall be taken from the ground on the 20m line in front of the scoring space. All players, except the goalkeeper and the player taking the kick-out (if other than the goalkeeper), shall be outside the 20m line. All other players shall be 13m from the ball until it has been kicked.
- 2.8 When the ball is played over the end-line and outside the goalposts by the team defending that end, a free kick off the ground shall be awarded to the opposing team on the 45m line opposite where the ball crossed the end-line.

2.9 When a team plays the ball over the side-line, a free kick from the hand(s) shall be awarded to the opposing team from the place where the ball crossed the side-line. If opposing players play the ball simultaneously over the side-line, or if the officials are not sure which team played the ball last, the linesman shall throw in the ball between one player from each team. A ball that strikes a side-line or corner flag shall be treated as having crossed the side-line. All players except the player taking the side-line kick, or the two players contesting the throw-in, shall be at least 13m from the ball until it has been kicked or thrown in.

2.10 If the ball touches any non-player during play, play is restarted by throwing in the ball at the place concerned, but if the ball touches any non-player from a free kick, the free kick shall be retaken.

EXCEPTION

- (i) As provided in Rule 3.3 (a)
- (ii) If the ball has been prevented from going over a boundary line by a non-player other than the referee, it shall be treated as having crossed the line, and the referee shall make the appropriate award.

RULE 3 - SCORES

3.1 A **goal** is scored when the ball is played over the goal-line between the posts and under the crossbar by either team.

A **point** is scored when the ball is played over the crossbar between the posts by either team.

A goal is equivalent to three points.

The team with the greater final total of points is the winner.

EXCEPTIONS

A player on the team attacking a goal and who is in possession of the ball may not score: -

- (i) by carrying the ball over his opponents' goal-line;
- (ii) a goal with his hands except as provided in Rule 1.2 EXCEPTION (ii);
- (iii) a point with his open hand(s), but may score a point by fisting the ball.

3.2 A score may be made by striking the ball in flight with the hand(s).

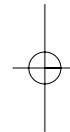
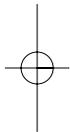
3.3 (a) A score shall be allowed if, in the opinion of the referee, the ball was prevented from crossing the goal-line by anyone other than a player or the referee.

(b) If part of the goal-posts or crossbar is displaced during play, the referee shall award



the score which he considers would have resulted had a part not been displaced.

- 3.4 If a defending player plays the ball through his own scoring space in any manner, this shall count as a score.



Rules of Foul Play

RULE 4 - TECHNICAL FOULS

- 4.1 To overcarry or overhold the ball.
- 4.2 (a) To throw the ball.
 - (b) To handpass the ball without a definite striking action.
- 4.3 To lift the ball off the ground with the knees.
- 4.4 To lie on the ball.
- 4.5 To touch the ball on the ground with the hand(s) except as provided in Rule 1.2.
- 4.6 To bounce the ball more than once consecutively after catching it.
- 4.7 To play the ball up with the hand(s) and catch it again before it touches the ground, another player, or goal-posts.
- 4.8 To wrest the ball from an opponent who has caught the ball.
- 4.9 For an attacking player to enter opponents' small rectangle before the ball enters it during play.

EXCEPTIONS

- (i) If an attacking player legally enters the small rectangle, and the ball is played from that area but is returned before the attacking

player has time to leave the area, provided he does not play the ball or interfere with the defence, a foul is not committed.

- (ii) When a point is scored from outside the small rectangle and the ball is sufficiently high to be out of reach of all players, the score shall be allowed even though an attacking player may have been within the small rectangle before the ball - provided that the player in question does not interfere with the defence.

4.10 (a) To change the ball from one hand to the other, without the original holding hand maintaining contact until the change is completed.

- (b) To change the ball from one hand to the other more than once, unless the ball is bounced or toe-tapped between the changes.

4.11 (a) For a player on the team awarded a free kick or a side-line kick to be less than 13m from the ball before it is kicked.

- (b) For a player on the team awarded a penalty kick to be inside the 20m line or the arc before the ball is kicked.

4.12 For a player attacking a goal to carry the ball over opponents' goal-line.

4.13 For a player attacking a goal who is in possession of the ball to score a goal with his hand(s) or a point with his open hand(s), except as provided in Rule 1.2 EXCEPTION (ii).

PENALTY FOR ABOVE FOULS - Free kick from where the foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTIONS of Rule 2.2

4.14 To be inside opponents' 20m line before the kick-out is taken after a wide.

PENALTY - Free kick from defenders' 20m line opposite where the foul occurred.

4.15 When within own small rectangle to be less than 13m from the ball for opponents' free kick.

PENALTY - Penalty kick.

4.16 (a) For a player on the team defending a penalty kick, with the exception of the goalkeeper, to be inside the 20m line or the arc before the kick is taken.

(b) For the goalkeeper defending a penalty kick to move nearer than 13m before the kick is taken.

PENALTY -

If a goal is not scored, the referee shall allow the penalty kick to be retaken.

4.17 For an opposing player to be nearer than 13m to the ball before a free kick or a side-line kick is taken.

PENALTY - Free kick 13m more advantageous than place of original kick - up to opponents' 13m line.

4.18 To delay an opponent taking a free kick or side-line kick by hitting or kicking the ball away, not releasing the ball to the opposition, or deliberately not moving back to allow a quick free kick to be taken.

- 4.19 To interfere with a player taking a free kick or side-line kick by jumping up and down, waving hands or any other physical or verbal interference considered by the referee to be aimed at distracting the player taking the kick.

EXCEPTION

A player holding his hands upright shall not constitute an interference.

PENALTY - FOR THE ABOVE FOULS - Free kick 13m more advantageous than the place of original kick-up to opponents' 13m line.

- 4.20 For an opposing player to be less than 13m from the ball before a kick-out after a score.

PENALTY - Free kick 13m more advantageous than place of original kick-out.

- 4.21 To reset the ball for a kick-out/free kick/penalty from the ground, without the referee's permission, after the whistle has been blown for the kick-out/ free kick/penalty, to be taken from the ground.

- 4.22 To play the ball again after taking a free kick / penalty / sideline kick before another player has touched it, unless the ball rebounds off the goal-posts/crossbar.

- 4.23 To make a divot for the purpose of teeing up the ball for a free kick or kick-out.
- 4.24 To advance the ball deliberately from the place at which a free kick or side-line kick is to be taken.
- 4.25 To waste time by delaying the taking of a free kick or side-line kick awarded to own team.

PENALTY FOR THE ABOVE FOULS -

(i) Cancel free kick or side-line kick.

(ii) Throw in the ball where the foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTION (v) of Rule 2.2.

- 4.26 For a player taking the kick-out to take the ball into his hand(s) before another player has played it.
- 4.27 To be inside own 20m line when one's team is taking a kickout, except as provided in Rule 2.7.
- 4.28 For another player on the team taking the kick-out after a wide to play the ball before it has travelled 13m.
- 4.29 For a player on the team taking the kick-out after a score, other than the player taking the kick, to be less than 13m from the ball when it is kicked.
- 4.30 To waste time by delaying own kick-out.

- 4.31 To take the kick-out after a wide from outside the small rectangle.
- 4.32 To take the kick-out after a score from outside the 20m line.

PENALTY FOR THE ABOVE FOULS -

- (i) Cancel kick-out.**
(ii) Throw in the ball on defenders' 20m line in front of scoring space.

- 4.33 For a player(s) from each team to foul simultaneously.

PENALTY - Throw in the ball where the fouls occurred except as provided in EXCEPTION (v) of Rule 2.2.

- 4.34 To go outside the boundary lines to gain an advantage except as provided in Rule 1.9.
- 4.35 To interfere with goal-posts to distract opponents or to gain an advantage.

PENALTY FOR THE ABOVE FOULS - Caution offender; order off for second cautionable foul.

- 4.36 When a team commits a technical foul, the referee may allow the play to continue if he considers it to be the advantage of the opposing team. Once he allows play to continue, he may not subsequently award a free for that foul. He shall apply any relevant disciplinary action.

RULE 5 - AGGRESSIVE FOULS

- 5.1 To strike or attempt to strike an opponent with the head, arm, elbow, hand or knee.
- 5.2 To kick or attempt to kick an opponent.
- 5.3 To stamp on an opponent.
- 5.4 To behave in any manner which is dangerous to an opponent.
- 5.5 To strike or attempt to strike any match official. To interfere with or use abusive language or conduct to a match official.

PENALTY FOR THE ABOVE FOULS -

- (i) Order offender off.
- (ii) Free kick from where the foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTIONS of Rule 2.2.

- 5.6 To commit any of the fouls listed in Rule 5.1 to Rule 5.4 inclusive against a team mate.

PENALTY -

- (i) Order offender off.
- (ii) Throw in the ball where the foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTION (v) of Rule 2.2.

- 5.7 To commit any of the fouls listed under Rule 5.1 to Rule 5.4 inclusive on an opponent on the

field prior to the start of the game or at half-time.

PENALTY - Offender shall be treated as ordered off and shall not participate (or further participate) in the game.

NOTE - Once the referee has received the list of players, or a substitution/temporary replacement slip which includes the offender's name, the player may not be substituted.

- 5.8 To pull down an opponent.
- 5.9 To trip an opponent with hand(s) or foot.
- 5.10 To jump at an opponent.
- 5.11 To threaten or to use abusive or provocative language or gestures to an opponent.
- 5.12 To block or attempt to block with the boot when an opponent is kicking the ball from the hand(s).
- 5.13 To prevent or attempt to prevent an opponent from lifting or kicking the ball off the ground by striking an opponent's hand, arm, foot or leg with the boot.
- 5.14 To engage in any other form of rough play.

PENALTY FOR THE ABOVE FOULS -

- (i) Caution the offender; order off for second cautionable foul.**
- (ii) Free kick from where the foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTIONS of Rule 2.2.**

5.15 To threaten or to use abusive or provocative language or gestures to a team-mate.

PENALTY -

(i) Caution the offender; order off for second cautionable foul.

(ii) Throw in from where the foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTION (v) of Rule 2.2.

5.16 To push an opponent or hold an opponent with the hand(s).

5.17 To use the fist on or around the body of an opponent for the purpose of dispossessing him of the ball.

5.18 (a) To charge an opponent in the back or to the front.

(b) To charge an opponent unless:-

(i) he is in possession of the ball, or

(ii) he is playing the ball, or

(iii) both players are moving in the direction of the ball to play it.

(c) To charge an opponent for the purpose of giving an advantage to a team-mate.

(d) To charge the goalkeeper in his small rectangle.

(e) For a player in possession of the ball to charge an opponent.

PENALTY FOR THE ABOVE FOULS -

(i) Free kick from where the foul occurred

except as provided under EXCEPTIONS of Rule 2.2

(ii) Caution offender for committing any of above fouls a second time. Order off for a further repetition or for other cautionable foul.

5.19 For a player to retaliate between the award of a free kick to his team and the free kick being taken.

PENALTY -

(i) Cancel free kick.

(ii) Throw in the ball where the original foul occurred except as provided under EXCEPTION (v) of Rule 2.2

(iii) Apply any other relevant penalty of Rule 5.

5.20 For a player(s) from each team to foul simultaneously.

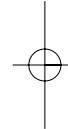
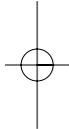
PENALTY -

(i) Throw in the ball where the fouls occurred except as provided under EXCEPTION (v) of Rule 2.2.

(ii) Apply any other relevant penalty of Rule 5.

5.21 When an Aggressive Foul is drawn to the referee's attention by an umpire or linesman, the referee may apply the appropriate penalty, as per Rule 5, and shall restart play as per Rule 2.

5.22 When a team commits an aggressive foul, the referee may allow play to continue if he considers it to be to the advantage of the offended team. Once he allows play to continue, he may not subsequently award a free for that foul. He shall apply the relevant penalty.



RULE 6 - DISSENT

6.1 To challenge the authority of a match official.
PENALTY - Caution the offender; order off for second cautionable foul.

6.2 To show dissent with the referee's to award a free kick to the opposing team.

PENALTY - The free kick already awarded shall be taken 13m more advantageous than the place of original kick - up to opponents' 13m line.

6.3 (a) To refuse to leave the field of play when ordered off.

(b) To rejoin the game after being ordered off.

PROCEDURE

First give a three minute warning to the team captain, or the official in charge of the team, or the player(s) involved, and then, if the player(s) refuses to comply, terminate the game.

6.4 A team or player(s) leaving the field without the referee's permission or refusing to continue playing.

PROCEDURE - AS IN RULE 6.3

Any player willing to continue shall give his name to the referee.

Important Terms and Definitions - Football and Hurling

The following list of Definitions of Terms used in the Playing Rules forms an integral part of these rules.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. BOUNCE | For a player to play the ball against the ground with his hand(s) and back to his hand(s) again. |
| 2. CATCH | To gain control of the ball with the hand(s) in a way which prevents it falling to the ground. |
| 3. CAUTION | To take a player's name and show him a yellow card. |
| 4. CHARGE
(Fair) | Provided he has at least one foot on the ground, a player may make a side-to-side charge on an opponent (a) who is in possession of the ball, or (b) who is playing the ball or (c) both players are moving in the direction of the ball to play it. |
| 5. DELAY
(Deliberate) | Deliberately taking too much time to retrieve the ball, or to restart play, or any action which unduly delays the restart of play. |

6. DIVOT

An elevation formed from the surface of the pitch for the purpose of teeing up the ball on the ground.

7. HANDPASS

When in possession, the ball may be struck with the open hand or fist - provided there is a definite striking action, with the striking hand not being in contact with ball before delivering the strike.

In a two-handed pass, the ball may be struck off a holding hand by the other hand, or released and struck. In a one-handed pass, the ball shall be released from the hand before being struck by the same hand. The releasing of the ball, when used, shall be considered an integral part of the hand/fisted pass.

8. FOUL

- Aggressive
- Dissent
- Technical

To physically or verbally abuse any player or official.

To disagree openly with any official about any decision.

To 'foul' the ball, or any other foul that is not aggressive or dissenting.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 9. IN FLIGHT | The ball is deemed to be in flight, once it is off the ground, having been played away within the Rules of Fair Play. |
| 10. LIFT | To use the foot or feet to raise the ball from the ground to the hand(s). |
| 11. OVERCARRY | To take more than four steps while holding the ball in the hand(s). |
| 12. OVERHOLD | To hold the ball longer than is required to take four steps. |
| 13. PLAY THE BALL | To touch the ball. The last player touching the ball before it crosses a boundary line shall be considered the last person playing it. |
| 14. 'PULL'
(FAIR) | To swing the hurley to play or attempt to play the ball. |
| 15. TACKLE | Any attempt to dispossess or reduce the advantage of opponent within the Rules of Fair Play. With the exception of the charge (fair), the tackle is aimed at the ball not the player. |
| 16. THROW | When the ball, held in the hand(s), is played away without a definite striking action. |

17. THROW-IN To throw the ball up over the heads of one player from each team (Football) or to throw the ball along the ground between one player from each team (Hurling). For the start of the game and the restart after half-time, the throw-in shall be between two players from each team.

18. TOE-TAP To release the ball from the hand(s) to the foot and kick it back into the hand(s).

19. TOSS
(Football) To release the ball from the hand(s) to kick it, toe-tap it, or pass it with the hand(s).

(Hurling) To release the ball from the hand to strike it with the hurley, foot or hand.

20. WREST To attempt to dispossess an opponent who already has a (firm) hold on the ball, by grabbing the ball to take it from him.

