



Reference tool for Coaches and Parents

Basic Soccer Position Terms

Backs – Refers to defenders.

Defender – A player who works mainly in the defensive third of the field. They are primarily focused on stopping the opposition's attackers from scoring.

Forward – A player who is responsible for most of a team's scoring. They play in front of the rest of their team (or in the attacking third of the field) where they can take most of the shots.

Fullback – a rear defender.

Goalie – Abbreviation for Goalkeeper.

Goalkeeper – I bet you know this one. The player positioned directly in front of the goal who tries to prevent shots from crossing the goalline; the only player allowed to use their hands and arms, though only within the 18-yard penalty area.

Keeper – Abbreviation for Goalkeeper.

Midfielder – A player generally positioned in the middle third of the field between the forwards and defenders. Their job is to link the defense and the offense through ball control and passing. They play both an attacking role and a defensive role.

Striker – Generally the same as a forward, though it sometimes refers to a forward that is his team's primary scoring threat.

Sweeper – Not always used. In some formations, a single defender that plays closest to their own goal behind the rest of the defenders; a team's last line of defense in front of the goalkeeper.

Advanced Soccer Positions

Attacking Midfielder – The midfielder that plays right behind the forwards; they support the offense by providing passes to forwards to set up goals.

Central Defender – A player who guards the area directly in front of their own goal, often considered the strongest defender.

Central Forward – A team's best-scoring forward who plays towards the center of the field.

Central Midfielder – The midfielder most responsible for organizing play in the midfield area, creating scoring opportunities for the attackers, and often a team's leader.

Defensive Midfielder – The player positioned just in front of their team's defense and often assigned to mark the opposition's best offensive player; tends to play more defense as a midfielder.

Finisher – A forward or striker who has the ability to "put away" or score when opportunities are given to them.

Halfback – Same as a midfielder.

Midfield Anchor – Same as a defensive midfielder.

Midfield General – Same as the central midfielder.

Midfield Maestro – Same as the central midfielder.

Stopper – The player that defends or guards the best scorer on the attacking team, often the opposition's striker.

Wingers – The outside forwards and midfielders (often the fastest players and best dribblers) who play on the sides of the field. Their primary task is to provide them with accurate crossing passes so they can shoot at the goal.

Basic Soccer Field Terms

Center Circle – a circular marking with a 10-yard radius in the “center” of the field from which kickoffs are taken to start or restart the game. Purpose: Simply a reference line for the referee and defenders. Defenders must be at least 10 yards away from the ball prior to start or restart.

Center Line – See Midfield line.

Center Spot – The “center” of the center circle from which kickoffs are taken to start or restart the game. Not too complicated!

Corner Arc – an arc or quarter-circle with a radius of 1 yard located at each of the 4 corners of the soccer field. Purpose: Also a reference line, the ball must be kicked from inside this arc on a corner kick.

Corner Flag – the flag located at each of the 4 corners of the soccer field, inside the corner area.

End Line – the boundary line extending from corner to corner along its width at each end.

Field – the rectangular area where soccer matches are played.

Goal Area – the rectangular area (20 x 6 yd. on a full-size soccer field) marked within the penalty area (or inside the larger rectangle) and directly in front of goal. Purpose: Marks the area from which all goal kicks must be taken.

Goal Box – commoner's term for the goal area or sometimes the penalty area.

Goal Line – same as the end line.

Midfield Line – a line in the center of the soccer field that divides the field in half along its width and runs parallel to the goals. Purpose: Used for start and restart as well as for calling offside. A player cannot be offside on their half of the field. Also called the center line.

Penalty area – The larger rectangle (18 x 44 yd. On a full size field) in front of the goal that includes the goal area. Purpose: Marks both where the goalkeeper is allowed to touch the ball with his hands AND the area where harsh fouls committed by the defending team result in penalty kicks.

Penalty Arc – The arc at the top of the penalty area. Purpose: Designates how far back all players must be away from the ball while a penalty kick is being taken.

Penalty Mark (or Spot) – the mark on the soccer field from which penalty kicks are taken.

Pitch – Another word for the field.

Sideline – common word for the touchline.

Touchline – the line that runs along the length of each side of the field. Commonly called the sideline in other sports.

Basic Soccer Action Terms

Center – a pass from either side of the field towards the middle of the field. It is used primarily to get the ball closer to the front of the goal. The words “center” and “cross” are used interchangeably.

Charging – a method of running at and unbalancing the player who has possession, or is attempting to gain possession of the ball; the act of using a "shoulder" against an opponent's shoulder to gain an advantage, allowed only when the ball is playable (i.e. within 3 feet).

Clearing – the act of moving the ball out of the area of one’s own goal by throwing (goalkeeper only) or kicking it.

Cross – another word for center.

Fake – a move by a player meant to deceive an opposing player. Used to gain an advantage, it is frequently used when dribbling to get past an opponent.

Feint – another word for a fake.

Foot Trap – the use of the foot, usually the bottom, to control a rolling or low bouncing ball.

Header – When a player passes or shoots the ball with his head.

Save – the act of a goalkeeper in stopping a shot that would have otherwise gone into the goal.

Screening – another word for shielding.

Shielding –used by the person with the ball to protect the ball from a defender; the ball carrier keeps their body between the ball and the defender.

Slide Tackle – a move where a player attempts to win the ball by sliding towards the ball. If the tackling player touches the ball first, he is allowed to make contact with the player controlling the ball. If the tackling player strikes the player before the ball, a foul is assessed. A tackle from behind is always a foul regardless of whether the tackler managed to get to the ball first.

Tackle – the act of taking the ball away from a player by kicking or stopping it with one's feet.

Trap – the use of one’s body to slow down and control a moving ball, most often using the chest, thighs or feet.

Advanced Soccer Action Terms

Banana Kick – a kick that curves such that it take the shape of a banana. This is usually attempted on a corner kick to curve the ball from the corner directly into the goal.

Bicycle Kick – when a player kicks the ball in mid-air backwards and over their own head, usually making contact above waist level. Not too frequent at the youth level!

Cut Back – dribbling the ball backwards in the reverse way of the goal in an attempt to keep possession of the ball.

Cut Down the Angle – when the goalie comes out of the goal several feet to make themselves closer and larger to an

attacker. The effect is to leave the attacker less open net to shoot at.

First Time Ball – when the ball is received and propelled in a single movement. Also called one touch pass and first touch.

First Touch – another word for first time ball.

Flick – a quick header.

Hospital Ball – a dangerous pass from one teammate to another. Instead of being crisp the pass is too soft, resulting in a pass that becomes a 50/50 ball (up for grabs) instead of one that is easily received.

Instep Drive – a shot taken with the instep of a player's foot; usually the most powerful and accurate of shots.

Instep Pass – a pass made by striking the ball with – yes, you guessed it, the instep.

In Swinger – a ball that is curving in toward the goal, usually made from a corner kick. Same thing as a banana kick.

"Man On" – the call a player makes to a teammate who is closely marked by an opposing player but may not be aware of it.

Mark – to cover an opponent with or without the ball to keep them from passing, receiving or shooting the ball.

Narrowing the Angle – same as cut down the angle.

Offside Trap – a play by the defense to catch the attacking team offside. The rear defenders will quickly pull up past the attackers to put the attackers in an offside position. See the Soccer Rules Page for more information on the offside rule.

One Touch Pass – another term for a first time ball.

"Pull Up" – can also be “push up”, a phrase used to tell the defense to move up the field in a more attacking position. Sometimes used as the command for an offside trap.

Scissors Kick – another word for bicycle kick.

Shoulder Tackle – a tackle used to get the ball away from an opponent by making shoulder-to-shoulder contact.

Two Touch Pass – a pass in which the ball is received by a player with one touch and then played to a teammate with the next touch.