

Netball Umpiring

Guide and Basic Rules



what does it mean to be an umpire?

Your job is to make sure the players have a **safe, fair** and **enjoyable** game. You can do this by:

- ❖ knowing the rules
- ❖ being clear in your decisions and communication
- ❖ being consistent
- ❖ being friendly and enthusiastic
- ❖ using common sense

Being an umpire means you get to participate in fast, skilful games and help the players play their best netball.

A couple of things to remember are:

- ❖ don't penalise players just because you don't believe they could have done something (like intercepted that ball, moved that far, or saved a ball from out of court)
- ❖ umpire what you see, not what you think people want you to call
- ❖ but when you do see something, blow your whistle and give the decision – the umpire making decisions is as much a part of the game as players passing the ball

making decisions

When you make a decision, you do this by:

- ❖ blowing your whistle – make this **loud, short** and **sharp**. Blow the whistle harder than you think you need, so that everyone knows to stop.
- ❖ stating the decision – tell the players what the **infringement** is (footwork, obstruction, contact), **who** you are penalising, and the **sanction** (free pass, penalty pass or throw in)
- ❖ using **hand signals** to show what the infringement is and **where** the sanction should be taken from

Hand signals should be **strong** (make them bigger than you feel comfortable with to start off) and **sustained** (hold them long enough for players to see).

sanctions

Sanctions are what you award when there has been an **infringement**. The two sanctions you can award are:

free pass

A **free pass** is awarded when a player breaks a minor rule, like footwork, over a third or replay. Any player on the other team takes the pass from the place the infringement happened.

penalty pass

A **penalty pass** is awarded when a player breaks a major rule, which is either contact or obstruction. Any player on the other team takes the pass from the place the infringement happened, and if they are in the goal circle, they can shoot. The **infringer** (the player who broke the rule) stands **out of play** (beside the player taking the pass or shot) until the ball is released.

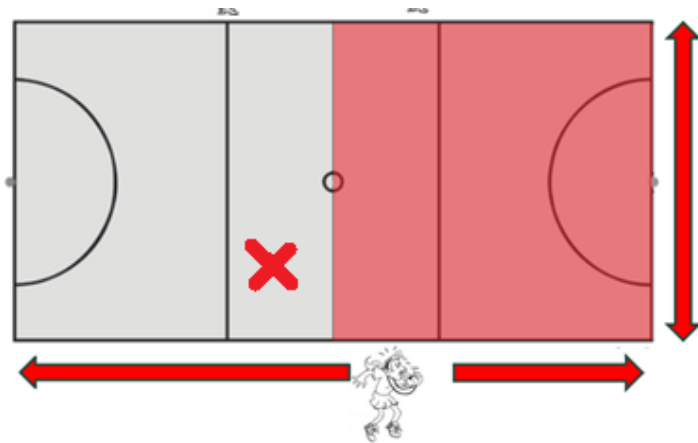
As well as the two types of sanctions, there is a:

throw in

A **throw in** is taken when the ball goes out (when it touches something out of court, or a player with the ball touches something out of court). Any player on the other team stands just behind the line and throws the ball in.

areas of control

It's important to know which areas on the court you make decisions in. You shouldn't ever make decisions in the other umpire's area (even if you're "sure" you saw it!), because this is confusing for the players and creates inconsistency.



If you are this umpire, you control everything happening **on the court** in the right-hand half of the court (the area marked in **red** in the diagram).

You also decide whether the ball has gone out and award **throw ins** on the whole side line and goal line marked by the **red** arrows in the diagram.

You **should not** make decisions where the red X is in the diagram – this is in the other umpire's area of control.

positioning

Because of the areas you control, you should move down the sideline to your right, and along the goal line to your right.

Try to be **just ahead of the ball**, as this gives you the best position to see what the player with the ball is doing, and anyone defending them.

Stay on the side line until the ball is near the goal circle, and then **run** to the goal line – you can cut the corner if there are no players in the way.

On the goal line, **stand back** and stay open to the court so you can see everyone easily. If the ball goes to the right hand side of the circle, move to that side of the goal post.

If the defending team gets the ball, move quickly back to the side line – again, cut the corner if there's nobody in the way.

When the ball is in the other umpire's end of the court, move down to the transverse line (the one separating the goal third and centre third). You can't make decisions on the court in that half, but if the ball goes out your side line, you need to be close enough to see who it came off and to communicate your decisions.

centre passes

Each team takes turns taking the centre pass.

You will need a hair band to keep track of who has the next centre pass. After each goal, swap the hairband to the other hand and point in the direction of the next centre pass.

The Centre from the team with the ball needs to stand with at least one foot completely in the centre circle. The umpire should blow the whistle as soon as the Centre puts a foot in the circle.

Who blows the whistle for the centre pass?

- ❖ For the first pass in each quarter, the umpire whose end the play is going blows the whistle
- ❖ For each other pass in the quarter, the umpire who had the last goal scored at their end blows the whistle

The Centre from the other team should be in the centre third. Everyone else should be in their own goal third.

None of these other players are allowed into the centre third until the whistle goes (if they've jumped from the goal third but not yet touched the ground in the centre third, they're ok).

If they do enter early, they are penalised for **breaking** and a **free pass** is awarded to the other team in the centre third.

The centre pass must be caught or touched by someone standing in the centre third. If this doesn't happen, the team who took the centre pass is penalised for **untouched centre pass** and a **free pass** is awarded to the other team in the goal third.

goals

A goal is scored when the Goal Shooter or Goal Attack shoot from inside the goal circle and the ball goes completely through the ring.

You signal a goal by raising an arm, and then signal whose centre pass it is while running back to the centre third to blow the whistle for the centre pass.

start and end of quarter

At start of the quarter, hold an arm up (tilted to the right) and blow the whistle to start the game.

At the end of a quarter, when you hear the buzzer, blow a long whistle to end the quarter (there is no signal needed!).

Important: If you have awarded a **penalty pass** (for contact or obstruction) in the goal circle before you blow the whistle for time, let the team take the shot at goal.

Also important: If a shot has left the hands of the Goal Shooter or Goal Attack before you blow the whistle to end the quarter and the ball goes through the ring, the goal counts.

footwork

landed foot

If a player catches the ball in the air and lands on one foot, or catches the ball while standing on one foot, this foot is called the **landed foot**.

If they catch the ball in the air and land on both feet at the same time, or catch the ball while standing on both feet, they can choose which foot to move.

Once they move one foot, the other foot (the one they didn't move) is the landed foot.

what the player can do

- ❖ They can pivot as long as the landed foot stays in the same place (but it can turn).
- ❖ They can step onto the non-landed foot, and pick the landed foot up.
- ❖ They can step onto the non-landed foot and then jump in the air.

what the player can't do

- ❖ They can't pick the landed foot up and put it down again before releasing the ball
- ❖ They can't drag the landed foot (but don't be too picky)
- ❖ They can't hop on either foot

Important: Make sure you know which is the landed foot so you can judge footwork properly.

obstruction

In order to defend, a defender must be 0.9m (or 3 feet) from the player with the ball.

This means that their **feet** must be that distance from the **landed foot** of the player with the ball. If the player with the ball picks up their landed foot, the defender has to be 0.9m (3 feet) from where the landed foot used to be.

The defender can reach or lean from here – the distance is only measured between the feet.

The defender can jump, even towards the player with the ball.

If the defender jumps or falls and lands within 0.9m (3 feet) of the player with the ball, they must stop defending (put their arms down) or they will be obstructing.

If a player obstructs, the other team is awarded a **penalty pass**, and the player who obstructed stands out of play beside the player taking the pass.

contact

With 14 players running around a netball court trying to get the ball, they will touch each other, run into each other and occasionally collide.

This is generally allowed, however a player **may not**:

- ❖ push, trip or hold an opponent
- ❖ bump into an opponent so that they lose their balance
- ❖ knock the ball out of an opponent's hands
- ❖ run through an opponent who was in a space first
- ❖ move into the space where an opponent is going to land, or where they were moving, so late that they can't avoid a collision

If they do any of these things, they should be penalised for **contact**, and the other team is awarded a **penalty pass**, and the player who contacted stands out of play beside the player taking the pass.

more rules and help

The full Rules of Netball can be found:

- ❖ on the Netball Australia website at <http://netball.com.au/rules-netball>
- ❖ through a smartphone app called 'Rules of Netball'
- ❖ your Association can purchase copies through Netball Tasmania

We hope you enjoy learning to umpire!