



2026 Referee Pathway

Eligibility & General Requirements

U.S. REFEREEING WAY





REFEREE PATHWAY



REFEREE

FIFA

ASSISTANT
REFEREE

REFEREE

PROFESSIONAL

ASSISTANT
REFEREE

REFEREE

NATIONAL

ASSISTANT
REFEREE

REGIONAL

REFEREE



2026 Referee Pathway Course Summary

REFEREE

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for detailed requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
Digital Referee	First-time	13	N/A	Online	3 hours	N/A
	Bridge		Digital Referee license in previous year	Online	1.5 hours	N/A
Referee	First-time	13	N/A	Hybrid	5 hours	2-3 hours
				In-person **	1 hour	5-6 hours
	Recert.		Referee license within previous three (3) years OR Regional Referee license in previous year	Online OR in-person **	5 hours	6-8 hours

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for detailed requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
Emeritus	Regional	45	Any combination of Regional Referee or Regional Emeritus licenses for at least three (3) cumulative years	Online	1 hour	N/A
	National		Any combination of National Match Official, PRO, FIFA, or National Emeritus licenses for at least three (3) cumulative years	Online	1 hour	N/A

** In-person course materials developed by U.S. Soccer will become progressively available from July 2025, providing SRCs the ability to host courses in-person, online and a combination of both



2026 Referee Pathway Course Summary

REGIONAL

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for detailed requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
Regional Referee	First-time	18	Referee license in each of the previous two (2) years (unless meets requirements for former professional player or coach pathway) • Game count, match evaluations, fitness test	Hybrid	5 hours	2-3 hours
	Recert.			In-person **	1 hour	6-8 hours
			Referee license in each of the previous two (2) years (unless meets requirements for former professional player or coach pathway) • Game count, match evaluations, fitness test	Online OR in-person **	5 hours	6-8 hours

NATIONAL

Course		Min. Age	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for detailed requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
National Referee or Assistant	First-Time	21	Application process, selected by U.S. Soccer Regional license in each of the previous two (2) years • Game count, match evaluations, fitness test	Online AND Camp	TBC	Four (4) days
	Recert.			Online AND Camp	TBC	Four (4) days

** In-person course materials developed by U.S. Soccer will become progressively available from July 2025, providing SRCs the ability to host courses in-person, online and a combination of both



2026 Referee Pathway Course Summary

PROFESSIONAL

FIFA

Course	Requirements / Previous Certification (see individual course page for detailed requirements)	Delivery	Online Duration	In-person Duration
PRO Referee, Assistant, or VMO	Contract with PRO	N/A	N/A	N/A
FIFA Referee, Assistant, or VMO	Nominated by the U.S. Soccer Referee Committee	N/A	N/A	N/A



Course Details

U.S. REFEREEING WAY

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First-Time Digital Referee

Age	13 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	N/A
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening (18 yrs. and older) SafeSport training (18 yrs. and older) Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Digital Referee Course Online Laws of the Game Update
Fitness Test	N/A
Practical Assignments	N/A

No changes from 2025



Digital Referee Bridge Course

Age	13 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a Digital Referee license during the previous registration year
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening (18 yrs. and older) SafeSport training (18 yrs. and older) Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Digital Transition Course Online Laws of the Game Update In-person or virtual practical training
Fitness Test	N/A
Practical Assignments	N/A

No changes from 2025



First-Time Referee

Age	13 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	N/A
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening (18 yrs. and older) SafeSport training (18 yrs. and older) Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online and/or In-person Referee Modules Online Laws of the Game Update In-person or virtual practical training
Fitness Test	N/A
Practical Assignments	N/A

2026 Changes

- Course materials updated
- Introduction of in-person delivery options with U.S. Refereeing Way materials
- Provision of U.S. Refereeing Way practical training materials



Referee Recertification

Age	13 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least one (1) Referee license during the previous three (3) registration years; OR Held a Regional Referee license in the previous registration year
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening (18 yrs. and older) SafeSport training (18 yrs. and older) Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Referee Recertification Course Online Laws of the Game Update
Fitness Test	N/A
Practical Assignments	N/A

2026 Changes

- Course materials updated
- Introduction of in-person delivery options with U.S. Refereeing Way materials
- Provision of U.S. Refereeing Way practical training materials (optional sessions)



Regional Emeritus Referee

Age	45 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a Regional Referee or Regional Emeritus licenses for at least three (3) registration years
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Emeritus Course Online Laws of the Game Update
Fitness Test	N/A
Practical Assignments	N/A

No changes from 2025



National Emeritus Referee

Age	45 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a National Referee, National Assistant Referee, PRO, FIFA, or National Emeritus licenses for at least three (3) registration years
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online Emeritus Course Online Laws of the Game Update
Fitness Test	N/A
Practical Assignments	N/A

No changes from 2025



First-Time Regional Referee

Age	18 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a Referee license for each of the two (2) previous registration years OR Only one (1) previous license required for former players in professional leagues, or coaches with a "C" license or higher (+)
Previous Game Experience	25 games as a Referee AND 15 games as an Assistant Referee at the adult amateur level as a U.S. Soccer match official (requirement not necessary for players/coaches as listed above)
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online or In-person Regional Referee training Online Laws of the Game Update In-person practical training
Fitness Test	FIFA Fitness Test (Sprints & Interval) Male - Women's Category 1 Female - Women's Category 3 Must be completed within the current or previous registration year
Evaluations	Three (3) evaluations as a referee within the previous registration year – see slide 44 for scoring requirements (2025 registration year: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025): Evaluations to be performed on matches at the adult amateur level (or above), with no more than one (1) evaluation allowed at the highest youth level (U18 or U19) (2 x 45-minute halves)

2026 Changes

- Course materials updated
- Clarification that evaluations are as a referee (not an assistant referee), and confirmation of scoring requirements
- Introduction of in-person delivery options with U.S. Refereeing Way materials
- Provision of U.S. Refereeing Way practical training materials



Regional Referee Recertification

Age	18 years of age or older
Enrollment	Registration
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held at least one (1) Regional Referee license in the previous three (3) registration years OR Must have held a National Referee or National Assistant Referee license in their career
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online or In-Person Regional Referee Recertifying training Online Laws of the Game Update In-person or virtual practical training
Fitness Test	FIFA Fitness Test (sprints & interval) Male - Women's Category 1 Female - Women's Category 3 Must be completed within the current or previous registration year
Evaluations	Two (2) evaluations as a referee within the previous registration year - see slide 44 for scoring requirements (2025 registration year: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025): Evaluations to be performed on matches at the adult amateur level (or above), with no more than one (1) evaluation allowed at the highest youth level (U18 or U19) (2 x 45-minute halves)

2026 Changes

- Course materials updated
- Clarification that evaluations are as a referee (not an assistant referee), and confirmation of scoring requirements
- Introduction of in-person delivery options with U.S. Refereeing Way materials
- Provision of U.S. Refereeing Way practical training materials (optional sessions)



First-Time National Referee / Assistant

Age	21 years of age or older
Enrollment	Application Required Selected by U.S. Soccer National Selection Committee
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a Regional Referee license for each of the two (2) previous registration years
Previous Game Experience	65 games at the adult amateur or higher level (professional or international): 40 games as a Referee 25 games as an Assistant Referee
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online National Match Official training Online Laws of the Game Update Attend and successfully complete in-person National Camp
Fitness Test	FIFA Fitness Test (at Camp) - role specific (sprints & interval) Male - Men's Category 1 Female - Women's Category 1
Evaluations	Minimum of three (3) National evaluations as either Referee or Assistant Referee, relevant to the license role applying for Evaluations must be completed by three (3) different National Referee Coaches Evaluation period from July 1 st , 2024 through to deadline for National applications

2026 Changes

- Adjustment of evaluation period to provide more time for officials to acquire evaluations



National Referee / Assistant Recertification

Age	21 years of age or older
Enrollment	Application Required Selected by U.S. Soccer National Selection Committee
Previous Certification Experience	Must have held a National Match Official license or higher in the previous registration year
Previous Game Experience	12 games in selected role at the adult amateur or higher level (professional or international) in the previous registration year (Exemptions may apply on application due to illness, injury, military service, pregnancy)
Safety & Compliance	Background Screening SafeSport training Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
Training	Online National Match Official recertification training Online Laws of the Game Update Attend and successfully complete in-person National Camp
Fitness Test	FIFA Fitness Test (at Camp) – role specific (sprints & interval) Male – Men’s Category 1 Female – Women’s Category 1
Evaluations	Minimum of three (3) National evaluations as either Referee or Assistant Referee, relevant to the license role applying for Evaluations must be completed by three (3) different National Referee Coaches Evaluation period from July 1 st , 2024 through to deadline for National applications

2026 Changes

- Clarification of game count being required on an annual basis
- Adjustment of evaluation period to provide more time for officials to acquire evaluations