



फुटबॉल रेफरी

A football referee is the chief decision-maker on the pitch — starting, stopping and controlling the match, applying the Laws of the Game, whistling for fouls, showing yellow and red cards, and taking split-second calls like...



Scan for everything on this career

Salary, exams, colleges, the routes in and the steps after — all on the portal.

career.gsssjethantri.in/#/career/football-referee

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प्रधानाचार्य, डाइट बाड़मेर
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श्रीमती संघमित्रा

वरिष्ठ व्याख्याता, डाइट बाड़मेर (सहयोग)
Sr. Lecturer, DIET Barmer (Support)



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करियर मार्गदर्शन कार्यशाला, डाइट बाड़मेर (14-17 जुलाई 2026) में विकसित व लोकार्पित
Developed & unveiled at the Career Guidance Workshop, DIET Barmer (14-17 July 2026)

यह एक स्वतंत्र परियोजना है, जो सरकार की आधिकारिक करियर-मार्गदर्शन सामग्री पर आधारित है। • An independent project based on the Government's official career-guidance content.

1 About this career

A football referee is the chief decision-maker on the pitch — starting, stopping and controlling the match, applying the Laws of the Game, whistling for fouls, showing yellow and red cards, and taking split-second calls like penalties. The job demands a sharp mind, deep knowledge of the game, strict neutrality and player-level fitness, since a referee runs for the full 90 minutes alongside the players. In India the path starts with a state football association's basic referee course, moves up through the AIFF grades (Category 5 to 1) and on to a FIFA badge, opening the door to ISL, I-League and international matches.

2 At a glance

Minimum qualification	Class 10/12 pass + good physical fitness
Course duration	Basic referee course about 1–2 weeks + exam
Starting salary	₹1,000–3,000/match (state/district level)
Work mode	Per-match basis, part-time to full-time contract

3 What you need

INTERESTS

- Deep interest in the game of football and its rules
- Enthusiasm for taking fair decisions and maintaining discipline
- Enjoy staying active and fit while working on the sports field

ABILITIES

- High physical fitness, running ability and stamina
- Quick, confident decision-making under pressure
- Sharp eyesight, concentration and reading of situations

KEY SKILLS

- Thorough knowledge of the FIFA Laws of the Game
- Decisiveness — instant correct calls on cards, fouls and penalties
- Match control, communication and management with players and coaches
- Mental toughness — staying calm under pressure and criticism
- High fitness — sprints, interval running and 90-minute stamina
- Neutrality and honesty, never favouring any team
- Teamwork and signalling with assistant referees and VAR

4 How to get there

- 1 Complete Class 10/12, understand football well and stay physically fit.
- 2 Enrol in your state football association's basic/district referee course (e.g. Rajasthan Football Association) and clear the exam and fitness test.
- 3 Register as a referee on the AIFF RASI portal and become a Category 5 referee.
- 4 With experience and assessments, rise through Category 4, 3, 2 up to Category 1 (national, ISL/I-League).
- 5 Keep passing the mandatory seasonal fitness test and laws exam each season.
- 6 On top performance, get nominated by the AIFF for a FIFA badge and become an international match official.

MAIN EXAMS

- State association basic referee course written/oral exam (Laws of the Game)
- AIFF category-upgrade exam and assessment (Category 5 to 1)
- Mandatory fitness test — six 40 m sprints (within 6 seconds each) and 40 × 75 m interval runs
- FIFA/AFC level fitness and laws examination (for the FIFA badge)

5 Where to study**GOVERNMENT INSTITUTES**

- राजस्थान फुटबॉल एसोसिएशन (रेफरी विभाग) — Jaipur, Rajasthan (<https://www.the-aiff.com/association/516>)

- एआईएफएफ – रेफरी एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन सिस्टम ऑफ इंडिया (RASI) पंजीकरण पोर्टल — All-India (online registration) (<https://refereeadmin.the-aiff.com/referee-registration>)
- अखिल भारतीय फुटबॉल महासंघ (AIFF) – रेफरी कोर्स — New Delhi / All-India (<https://www.the-aiff.com/referee-courses>)

PRIVATE INSTITUTES

- वेस्टर्न इंडिया फुटबॉल एसोसिएशन (WIFA) – रेफरी एजुकेशन — Mumbai, Maharashtra (<https://wifa.in/referee-education-2/>)
- राजस्थान फुटबॉल स्कूल — Jaipur, Rajasthan (<https://www.rajasthanfootballschool.in/>)

ONLINE

- एआईएफएफ रेफरी कोर्स सूची — Online (<https://www.the-aiff.com/referees-courses>)
- करियर गाइडेंस – रेफरी (फुटबॉल) पाथवे — Online (<https://careerguidance.unilearn.org.in/career/referee-football/>)

FEES

State association and AIFF basic referee courses are charged nominally or are often free once you become a Category 5 referee (per AIFF, becoming a referee needs no money). Minor costs go into registration, kit (uniform, whistle, cards) and travel, roughly ₹2,000–10,000.

6 What the work is like

WHERE YOU WORK

State and district league grounds, AIFF national tournaments, I-League and Indian Super League (ISL) stadiums, and — with a FIFA badge — international matches across Asia and the world.

WORK CULTURE

Work is mostly on weekend and evening match-days; referees must pass a fitness test and laws exam every season and train regularly. Travel is heavy, and pressure, criticism and harsh weather are common, but teamwork, discipline and closeness to the game make it exciting. The field is also opening up rapidly for women.

WHO HIRES

- | | |
|--|---|
| • All India Football Federation (AIFF) – Referees Department | • State football associations (e.g. Rajasthan Football Association, WIFA) |
| • Indian Super League (ISL) and I-League | • Asian Football Confederation (AFC) tournaments |

- FIFA – International List of Match Officials
- District and state leagues and youth/school-college tournament organisers

DEMAND (2026)

Football is growing fast in India — with the ISL, I-League, women's leagues and youth tournaments expanding, qualified referees are in demand at every level. The AIFF has introduced full-time referee contracts under its Elite Referee Development Programme (ERDP), and new Indian referees join the FIFA list every year. A shortage of trained, fit referees means good opportunities, especially for women referees.

7 Career growth

- 1 District referee (state association basic course, Category 5)
- 2 State referee (Category 4–3, state leagues and national tournaments)
- 3 AIFF national/elite referee (Category 2–1, I-League and ISL)
- 4 FIFA-badge referee (international and AFC elite match official)

EARNINGS

Starting	₹1,000–3,000/मैच (₹8,000–15,000/माह अंशकालिक)
Mid level	₹21,000–25,000/माह (राष्ट्रीय स्तर) + प्रति-मैच फीस
Senior level	₹50,000–1,00,000+/माह (एलीट/फीफा, ERDP पूर्णकालिक)

Income depends heavily on level and number of matches. Per the career-guidance portal, a national-level match official earns roughly ₹21,000–25,000/month; per-match fees for ISL/I-League matches are higher. Under the AIFF's Elite Referee Development Programme, top referees receive full-time contracts and a regular monthly salary, adding income and stability. (Figures are 2025–26 estimates.)

8 The good parts · The challenges

The good parts

- Stay connected to football with a chance to reach the top (ISL, FIFA)
- A respected, exciting career while staying fit and disciplined
- Rapidly growing opportunities for women and new regions, plus travel exposure

The challenges

- Pressure to pass tough fitness tests and laws exams every season
- Facing criticism and stress from players, coaches and crowds
- Early income is irregular and match-dependent; steady pay comes only at the top

9 Real-life journeys

Harish Kundu

FIFA-badge Indian football referee, Haryana

Harish Kundu of Haryana is counted among the most disciplined referees in Indian domestic football. Through hard work and consistent fitness he has officiated big fixtures in the I-League, Indian Super League (ISL), Durand Cup and Intercontinental Cup, and earned a place on the FIFA list. In January 2023 he was awarded a full-time referee contract under the AIFF's Elite Referee Development Programme. His journey shows that with deep knowledge of the Laws of the Game, neutrality and fitness, a young person from an ordinary background can become one of the country's top referees and an international match official.

Khel Now · <https://khelnnow.com/football/2023-09-indian-football-best-referees-current>

Kanika Barman

FIFA referee and AFC Elite Women Referee Panelist, Siliguri

Kanika Barman of Siliguri was first a state-medallist athlete in long jump and sprints, then took up football in 2009 and refereeing in 2012. Through steady effort she became a National Referee in 2018, a FIFA Referee in 2020, and was selected for the AFC Elite Women Referees Panel in 2022. She has officiated in the Indian Women's League, Senior Women's NFC and international fixtures. A mother herself, she says motherhood gives her strength. Her story inspires every girl who wants to make her mark on the pitch as a football referee.

All India Football Federation (AIFF) · <https://www.the-aiff.com/article/being-a-mother-gives-me-strength-says-afc-elite-women-referee-panelist-kanika-barman>

10 Sources & further reading

1. Rajasthan Career Guidance – Referee (Football) — <https://cg.rajasthan.gov.in/careerguidance/hi/career/%e0%a4%b0%e0%a5%87%e0%a4%ab%e0%a4%b0%e0%a5%80-%e0%a4%ab%e0%a5%81%e0%a4%9f%e0%a4%ac%e0%a5%89%e0%a4%b2-refreefootball/>
2. AIFF – Referee Courses and Pathway — <https://www.the-aiff.com/referee-courses>
3. AIFF – Elite & National Referee Fitness Testing (2025-26) — <https://www.the-aiff.com/article/elite-and-national-referees-undertake-mandatory-fitness-testing-ahead-of-2025-26-season>
4. Career Guidance – Referee (Football) Pathway and Salary — <https://careerguidance.unilearn.org.in/career/referee-football/>
5. FIFA – Match Officials of India — <https://inside.fifa.com/en/associations/IND/referees>



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