

RED CARD REPORT WRITING

A practical guide for match officials

Your report is evidence. Its job is to give the disciplinary process a clear, accurate account of what you personally saw and did. Write promptly, use your own words and stick to facts - not speculation, opinion or guesswork.

A simple structure: C-A-R-D

CONTEXT	When and where? What was happening? Where were you and what was your view?
ACTION	Exactly what did you see the player do? Describe the act, not just the offence label.
RESULT	Where was contact? What was the effect/reaction? Was treatment required, if you observed it?
DECISION	What sanction did you give, what reason did you communicate, and what happened afterwards?

Top tips

- Write it promptly. Make notes as soon as practical while the incident is fresh in your mind.
- Write only what you personally saw or heard. If you did not see something, do not fill in the gaps from other people's accounts.
- Describe, don't dramatise. 'Struck once with a closed right fist to the left side of the head' is more useful than 'viciously punched him'.
- Be precise. Include player/team, approximate match time, location, distance from the incident and whether your view was unobstructed where relevant.
- For contact offences, describe the mechanics. What body part made contact, where contact landed, direction, number of actions and what happened to the opponent.
- Do not decide intent or seriousness for the panel. Report the observable facts. The disciplinary panel assesses seriousness and sanction.
- Record relevant words accurately. If a player said something material, quote the words you actually heard. Do not tidy them up or interpret them.
- Record the aftermath. Treatment, player reaction, retaliation, a wider melee or abandonment should be included only where you personally observed it and it is relevant.
- Check it before submitting. Could someone who was not at the match understand exactly what happened and why you issued the Red Card?

Weak report vs useful report

Too vague:

"Red 7 punched Blue 9 in the face during a fight, so I sent him off."

More useful:

"In the 62nd minute, following a breakdown approximately 10 metres from the Blue goal line, I was approximately 5 metres from the players with an unobstructed view. I saw Red 7 strike Blue 9 once with a closed right fist to the left side of Blue 9's face. Blue 9 stepped backwards following the contact. I stopped play, identified Red 7 and showed him a Red Card for striking an opponent."

Useful prompts for common offences

Striking / punching	Open or closed hand? Which hand/arm? Number of strikes? Point of contact? Distance/view? Effect you observed?
Kicking / stamping	Which foot? Player's position? Where did the foot make contact? One action or repeated? What happened immediately afterwards?
Dangerous tackle / head contact	Approach and body position; height; point and nature of contact; dynamics you observed; ball carrier's reaction; any treatment you personally observed.
Abuse / threatening language	Exact words heard where possible; who they were directed at; your proximity; relevant gestures/actions; what you did next.

FINAL CHECK: Facts ✓ Clear chronology ✓ Specific action/contact ✓ Your decision ✓ No speculation ✓

Kent Society of Rugby Football Union Referees – Referee Development Resource

This guide is intended as practical support for referees. Referees should follow the current RFU Regulation 19 (Discipline) and the relevant RFU reporting procedures.

Reference: RFU Regulation 19 – Discipline. Prepared September 2026.