



USA HOCKEY OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES

Points of Emphasis

2011-12 and 2012-13 Playing Seasons

The goal of USA Hockey is to promote a safe and positive playing environment for all participants while continuing to focus on skill development and enjoyment of the sport. All officials, coaches, players, parents, spectators and volunteers are strongly encouraged to observe these “Points of Emphasis” when participating in the sport of ice hockey.

Fair Play and Respect

Fair play and respect are the backbone of any successful amateur sports program. In order for a positive environment to be created, it is imperative that all participants and spectators have respect for all players, coaches, officials, administrators, spectators and the sport of hockey. Hockey is a game demanding high levels of concentration and skill. Taunting or unsportsmanlike conduct directed at opponents or officials will not be tolerated.

Intimidation tactics have no place in ice hockey. These tactics include any contact to the head of the opponent, checking from behind and late avoidable body checks to an opponent who is no longer in possession and control of the puck. Officials are instructed to enforce these rules to a high standard and assess the appropriate penalty when these actions occur. In addition, officials are expected to strictly enforce any avoidable contact occurring after the whistle – including during scrum situations around the goal.

In non-check classifications, legal body contact shall be allowed and players allowed to compete using proper body position skills. However, any deliberate body checks shall be penalized accordingly. If a body check is delivered for the purpose of intimidation, a major penalty should be assessed to the offending player.

In classifications where body checking is allowed, the purpose of the check shall be to separate the opponent from the puck and officials should strictly penalize any illegal actions such as boarding, charging and a late avoidable body check to a player who is no longer in possession and control of the puck.

Players are encouraged to develop a deep sense of respect for all (opponents and officials) while endeavoring to enjoy the sport and improve their playing ability. Each player is expected to use proper skill and technique when engaging in any type of body contact.

Coaches are responsible for instructing their players to play the sport in a safe and sportsmanlike manner. To that end, coaches are directed to teach only those skills necessary to allow for proper and legal body contact.

Officials should be diligent and confident when officiating the sport. Each official shall enforce all playing rules fairly and respectfully with the safety of the players and the best interest of the game in mind. Players must be held accountable for dangerous and illegal actions with the proper enforcement of the rules at all times.

Spectators are encouraged to support their teams while showing respect for all players, coaches, officials and other spectators.

Standard of Play and Rule Emphasis

USA Hockey will continue to observe the Standard of Play and Rule Emphasis for restraining fouls adopted in June 2006. The goal is to reduce restraining infractions in the game, allowing the skill level of the participants to determine the outcome of a game and to increase participant enjoyment.

In addition, USA Hockey has adopted a Body Checking Standard of Play and Rule Emphasis for immediate implementation at all levels of play. This goal is to enhance player skill development by reducing intimidating infractions designed to punish the opponent. Proper enforcement of this standard will improve the skill of legal body contact or legal body checking at all levels of play.

Conclusion

Hockey should be enjoyed by all participants. To that end, all participants and spectators shall observe a level of personal behavior that demonstrates respect for all. The USA Hockey Officiating and Coaching Education programs will continue to increase awareness among all officials and coaches with regard to these Points of Emphasis and the Standard of Play and Rule Enforcement.

Standard of Play and Rules Emphasis – Body Checking

Through the standard of rules enforcement, our game will continue to allow the opportunity for improved skill development and a more positive hockey environment for all participants. The mission of USA Hockey is clear; through this new initiative a greater emphasis will be placed on skating, puck possession and the proper use of the body to establish position and legally gain a competitive advantage.

The goal of this enforcement standard is to create an environment that enhances player skill development by reducing intimidating infractions designed to punish the opponent. This standard is designed to improve the proper skill of legal body checking or contact at all levels of play while not removing the physical component from the game. A hard body check or using body contact/position (non-checking classifications) to gain a competitive advantage over the opponent should not be penalized as long as it is performed within the rules. The focus of the body check shall be to separate the opponent from the puck.

The principles of this body checking enforcement standard include the following:

- The purpose of a body check is to separate the opponent from the puck.
- Only the trunk (hips to shoulders) of the body shall be used to deliver a body check.
- The check must be delivered to the trunk (hips to shoulders) and directly from in front or the side of the opponent.
- Players who use their physical skills and/or anticipation and have a positional advantage shall not lose that advantage provided they use their body to check the opponent within the rules.
- Players will be held accountable for acts of an intimidating or dangerous nature.

Enforcement Standard – The following penalties are to be called with very strict enforcement.

BODY CHECKING (Non-Checking Classifications)

A player cannot deliver a body check to any player while participating in a non-checking classification.

Examples include:

- makes deliberate physical contact with an opponent with no effort to legally play the puck
- uses overt hip, shoulder or arm contact with the opponent to physically force them off the puck
- physically impedes the progress of the opponent with hips, shoulders or torso without establishing legal body contact and having no intent of playing the puck

BOARDING

A player cannot commit any infraction, including body checking, for the purpose of intimidation or punishment that causes their opponent to go violently or excessively into the boards. Examples include:

- accelerating through the check to a player who is in a vulnerable position off of the boards that causes them to be thrown violently into the boards
- driving an opponent excessively into the boards with no focus on or intent to play the puck
- any other infraction (tripping, cross-checking, charging etc.) that causes the opponent to be thrown violently and excessively into the boards

CHARGING

A player cannot take more than two fast strides or travel an excessive distance to accelerate through a body check for the purpose of punishing the opponent. Examples include:

- running or jumping into the opponent to deliver a check
- accelerating through a check for the purpose of punishing the opponent
- skating a great distance for the purpose of delivering a check with excessive force

CHECKING FROM BEHIND

A player cannot deliver a body check to an opponent directly from behind, or diagonally from behind. The onus is on the player delivering the check to not hit from behind. Examples include:

- body checking or pushing an opponent from behind directly into the boards or goal frame or in open ice

HEAD CONTACT

A player cannot contact an opponent in the head, face or neck, including with the stick or any part of the player's body or equipment. The onus is on the player delivering the check, regardless of size differential, to not make contact in the head/neck area of the opponent. Examples include:

- a body check delivered with any part of the body that makes contact with the head or neck area
- the use of the forearm or hands to deliver a check to the head or neck area of the opponent

ROUGHING

A player cannot use the hands, stick or extension of the arms to body check an opponent or deliver an avoidable body check to a player who is not in possession and control of the puck. Examples include:

- intentionally playing the body of an opponent who does not have possession and control of the puck
- delivering an avoidable check to a player who has already relinquished control of the puck by a pass or shot. This is oftentimes referred to as "finishing" the check
- any avoidable contact after the whistle shall be penalized strictly, including scrum situations around the goal or along the boards. Officials are instructed to assess an additional penalty to those players acting as the aggressor or who instigate any avoidable contact after the whistle

SUMMARY

All USA Hockey members must demonstrate awareness and support for the application, spirit and the respect of the rules in order for continued improvement of the game of hockey. At the same time, it is important to remember that:

- a player is entitled to use proper body position and body contact in all age classifications in order to gain a competitive advantage
- players are allowed to compete for body position using their strength and balance in front of the goal or along the boards
- in classifications where body checking is allowed, the focus of the body check must be to separate the opponent from the puck

Standard of Play and Rules Emphasis – Restraining Fouls

Through the standard of rules enforcement, our game will continue to allow the opportunity for improved skill development and a more positive hockey environment for all participants. The mission of USA Hockey is clear; through this new initiative a greater emphasis will be placed on skating, puck possession and the proper use of the body to establish position and a competitive advantage.

The goal of this enforcement standard is to reduce restraining infractions in the game and not to remove legal body checking or body contact. A hard body check or using body contact/position (non-checking classifications) to gain a competitive advantage over the opponent should not be penalized as long as it is performed within the rules.

The principles of this continued enforcement standard include the following:

- The use of the stick will be limited to only playing the puck.
- The stick will not be allowed to in any way impede a player's progress.
- The use of a free hand/arm will not be allowed to grab or impede a player's progress.
- Players who use their physical skills and/or anticipation and have a positional advantage shall not lose that advantage as a result of illegal acts by the opponent.
- Players will be held accountable for acts of an intimidating or dangerous nature.

Enforcement Standard – The following penalties are to be called with very strict enforcement.

HOOKING

A player cannot use his/her stick against an opponent's body (puck carrier or non-puck carrier) to gain a positional advantage. Examples include:

- tugs or pulls on the body, arms or hands of the opponent which allows for the space between the players to diminish
- placing the stick in front of the opponent's body and locking on – impeding the opponent's progress or causing a loss of balance.
- stick on the hand/arm that takes away the ability for the opponent to pass or shoot the puck with a normal amount of force

TRIPPING

A player cannot use his/her stick on the legs or feet of an opponent in a manner that would cause a loss of balance or for them to trip or fall. Examples include:

- placing the stick in front of the opponent's legs for the purpose of impeding progress, even if on the ice, with no effort to legally play the puck
- placing the stick between the legs of the opponent (can opener/corkscrew) that causes a loss of balance or impedes the progress of the opponent.

HOLDING

A player cannot wrap his/her arms around an opponent or use a free hand to clutch, grab or hold the stick, jersey or body on the opponent in a manner that impedes their progress. Examples include:

- wrapping one or both arms around the opponent along the boards in a manner that pins them against the boards and prevents them from playing the puck or skating
- grabbing the opponent's body, stick or sweater with one or both hands
- using a free arm/hand to restrain or impede the opponent's progress

INTERFERENCE

A player cannot use his/her body (“pick” or “block”) to impede the progress of an opponent with no effort to play the puck, maintain normal foot speed or established skating lane. Examples include:

- intentionally playing the body of an opponent who does not have possession or possession and control of the puck.
- using the body to establish a ”pick” or “block” that prevents an opponent from being able to pursue a puck carrier
- reducing foot speed or changing an established skating lane for the purpose of impeding an opponent from being able to pursue a puck carrier

SLASHING

The use of the stick will be limited to only playing the puck. Any stick contact, as a result of a slashing motion, to the hands/ arms or body of the opponent will be strictly penalized. In addition, hard slashes to the upper portion of the stick (just below the hands) of an opponent, with no attempt to legally play the puck, shall also be penalized.

SUMMARY

All USA Hockey members must demonstrate awareness and support for the application, spirit and the respect of the rules in order for continued improvement of the game of hockey. At the same time, it is important to remember that:

- a player is entitled to the ice he/she occupies as long as they are able to maintain their own foot speed and body position between opponent and puck
- players are allowed to compete for body position using their strength and balance in front of the goal or along the boards

CONCLUSION

Coaches are expected to teach proper skills and hold their players accountable for illegal and dangerous actions, regardless as to whether they are properly penalized, or not.

Parents are expected to support the decisions of the officials and support the coaches in teaching the proper skills in a safe and positive environment.

Officials shall enforce a strict penalty standard according to the guidelines that have been established.

Players are expected to compete within the playing rules.

Administrators are expected to hold players, coaches, officials and parents accountable for their actions in an effort to promote a safe and positive environment for all participants.

All members of USA Hockey share an equal responsibility to ensure the integrity of the game is upheld. The onus to incorporate adopted change is not only on the officials, but also on administrators, coaches, parents and players, as well.



RULE CHANGE SUMMARY

For Youth, Girls'/Women's and Adult Classifications

For the 2011-12 and 2012-13 Seasons

Rule #	Rule	Description of Change
	USA Hockey Official Playing Rules Book	Entire Rule Book has been edited for grammar and redundancy in an effort to provide for more logical flow and easier to read language.
	Standard of Play and Rules Enforcement	Adds language that addresses legal body checking and legal body contact, including a new Body Checking Standard of Play. The goal is to improve proper skills pertaining to legal body contact and body checking with the emphasis on separating the opponent from the puck.
103 & 104	Goal Lines and Goal Crease	Provides locations and dimensions of optional goal lines and goal creases to be added in each zone for use in cross-ice games.
109	Signals and Timing Devices	Deletes language referring to goal lights and the connection to the game clock. Clarifies responsibility of on-ice officials to determine whether a goal is scored at the end of a period.
201	Composition of Team	Moves language pertaining to maximum number of Team Officials allowed on the bench to this rule.
201	Composition of Teams	Outlines process to allow game to continue if no Team Officials are present on the bench due to penalty, injury or illness. Allows game to continue with proper adult supervision and suspended if no adult supervision is available.
203	Players in Uniform	Deletes language requiring officials to determine whether player's omission from game roster was inadvertent clerical error.
302	Skates	Deletes language referring to HECC approved skate blades – HECC no longer certifies skate blades.
304	Protective Equipment	Standardizes penalty as a misconduct for an equipment violation (except sticks) after a team warning has been issued.

Rule #	Rule	Description of Change
309	Adjustment to Clothing and Equipment	Moves language pertaining to clothing and equipment (Rule 602) to Rule 309 at the end of Section 3 – Equipment.
401	Penalties	Deletes language specifying order for players to enter penalty bench when coincidental penalties are assessed and location of respective penalty benches.
402	Minor Penalties	Gives authority to USA Hockey Affiliates or Governing Bodies to reduce length of minor penalties to 1 ½ minutes for games where period length is 15 minutes or less.
403 & 405	Major and Match Penalties	Requires a team to immediately place substitute player on penalty bench in instances where a non-coincidental major (plus game misconduct) or match penalty has been assessed (Excluding Adults).
501	Appointment of Officials	Moves all language pertaining to injured officials and/or process to be followed if officials are not present to this rule.
501	Appointment of Officials	Gives USA Hockey Districts or Affiliates the authority to use the Four-Official System (Two-Referees/Two Linesmen) in games under their jurisdiction at the Youth and Girls 16-&-Under age classifications and older.
604	Body Checking/Non-Checking Classifications	Moves language specific to body checking to stand alone Rule 604. Prohibits body checking in the 12-&-Under age classification as part of Progressive Checking Skill Development Program initiative that allows for greater body contact at younger levels and stricter enforcement of illegal body checks in checking classifications.
615	Fighting	Calls for additional suspension (three games) for a player who is assessed their second major penalty for fighting on the same team during the same season. For third fighting major on same team during the same season, player is suspended until a hearing has been conducted by the proper authorities.
615	Fighting	Strengthens rule for removing helmet during an altercation. Game misconduct is assessed to player whose helmet/facemask comes off during an altercation. A match penalty is assessed to any player who deliberately removes his (or opponent's) helmet/facemask during or prior to an altercation.

Rule #	Rule	Description of Change
620	Head Contact	Strengthens rule for any contact to the head, face or neck of the opponent with any part of the body or equipment. Calls for major plus game misconduct, or match penalty, to be assessed for any intentional or reckless contact to the head, face or neck of the opponent.
622	Holding an Opponent	Clarifies actions that call for a major plus game misconduct penalty to be assessed for rubbing, grabbing or holding the facemask and adds option for match penalty.
630	Off-Sides	Allows for delayed off-sides with “tag-up” option to be used in the Youth and Girls 14-&-Under age classifications and older.
	Passes	Deletes rule and allows all passes to be made unless prohibited elsewhere in the rules.
636	Start of Games and Time of Match/Time Outs	Consolidates these rules for efficiency and deletes some language that is not pertinent in this day and age.
639	Tripping/Clipping/Leg Checking	Clarifies rule and adds language addressing contact at or below the knees.
Glossary	Body Checking	Clarifies definition of legal body check to include purpose of the check is to separate opponent from puck.
Glossary	Fighting	Changes title of definition for “Fisticuffs” to “Fighting.”
Glossary	Head Contact	Modifies definition to conform with language in the rule.



RULE CHANGE SUMMARY

For Authorized Junior Age Classifications

For the 2011-12 and 2012-13 Seasons

Rule #	Rule	Description of Change
	Standard of Play and Rules Enforcement	Adds language that addresses legal body checking and legal body contact, including a new Body Checking Standard of Play. The goal is to improve proper skills pertaining to legal body contact and body checking with the emphasis on separating the opponent from the puck.
201	Composition of Team	Requires team to place coach on bench during warm-up and establishes fine for failure to do so.
203	Players in Uniform	Provides team 10 days to comply with uniform requirements once a player has been added to the active roster.
203	Players in Uniform	Adds fine if back-up goalkeeper (emergency goalkeeper) is dressed for game due to suspension of normally rostered goalkeeper(s).
203	Players in Uniform	Fines team for violation of logo/mark rules on uniform instead of ejecting the player in violation.
304	Protective Equipment	Deletes mouthpiece language in Note at beginning of rule to avoid conflict with mouthpiece rule.
404	Misconduct Penalties	Adds game ejection to language specifying a coach's involvement with the team following removal from game.
406	Penalty Shot	Allows for penalty shot to be awarded in cases where certain minor penalty are unable to be served in their entirety. This is only for those infractions that would call for a penalty shot if occurring in the last two minutes of a game.
406	Penalty Shot	Allows opposing goalkeeper to remain in the crease during a penalty shot.
501	Appointment of Officials	Allows the Four-Official System to be used in USA Hockey sanctioned Junior games.

Rule #	Rule	Description of Change
609	Delay of Game	Adds language including putting players on ice after icing infraction to this rule.
611	Face-Offs	Mandates all face-offs take place at one of the nine face-off spots and a defending zone face-off will take place after a penalty is assessed.
613	Fisticuffs	Clarifies instigator rule and establishes penalties for removing helmet prior to or during an altercation.
614	Goals and Assists	Allows a goal to be scored by directing with the skate as long as there is no distinct kicking motion.
616	Head Contact	Strengthens rule for any contact to the head, face or neck of the opponent with any part of the body or equipment. Calls for major plus game ejection/misconduct, or match penalty, to be assessed for any intentional or reckless contact to the head, face or neck of the opponent.
620	Icing	Prohibits a team from changing players after committing an icing infraction. Clarifies actions by the goalkeeper when leaving crease for nullification.
637	Time of Match or Time Outs	Clarifies when a time out may be called during a penalty shot or shoot out.
638	Tied Games	Adds and clarifies penalties to be assessed during a shoot out.
639	Tripping	Clarifies rule and adds language addressing contact at or below the knees.
640	Unnecessary Roughness (Roughing)	Adds match penalty for a goalkeeper who uses his blocker to strike an opponent.