



HWHL RULES

2025–2026 Season

1. Governing Rules and Facility Policies

All games will be governed by the official rules of CARHA Hockey and the Hamilton Women's Hockey League (HWHL). Note CARHA's New Rule, # 15 below.

All participants are expected to adhere to the policies and procedures of both the **Mohawk 4 Ice Centre** and **Gateway Arena** at all times.

2. Eligibility and Registration

All HWHL teams are officially registered with **CARHA Hockey**, which requires that all participants be **at least 19 years of age** by **December 31** of the current season.

To preserve the recreational nature of the league, participants **must not be registered** on any **Rep or Professional hockey team**.

Any member found in violation of this eligibility rule will be **immediately removed from the league** without refund.

3. Team Representative Responsibilities

Each team must appoint a designated Team Representative for the season. The Team Rep—or an alternate appointed by them—serves as the primary liaison between the league and their team.

Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring all player information on the team roster is accurate and up to date.
- Communicating league updates and important information to team members.
- Confirming the team has sufficient players and a goaltender for each scheduled game.
- Coordinating the return of all league-issued jerseys at the end of the season.

4. Mandatory Equipment Requirements

All players must wear properly fastened, CSA-approved helmets and full face masks or cages at all times while on the ice—before, during, and after games—until they have exited the ice surface.

Instructors participating in any on-ice programs within the HWHL are also required to wear helmets.

Additionally, all players **must** wear a certified BNQ-approved throat protector to be eligible to play. Any participant not wearing a neck guard will be asked to leave the ice until properly equipped.

5. Gameplay Eligibility

To participate in a game, players must be listed on their team's official registered roster for the season. If a team is short players for a scheduled game, substitute skaters or goalies may be used in accordance with the league's substitution policy (see 8: Substitution and Forfeit Policy).

6. Game Format and Timing

Period Lengths:

- **1st Period:** 12-minute stop time
- **2nd & 3rd Periods:** 10-minute stop time each
- In the event of delays (e.g., injury or unforeseen circumstances), the league may adjust all periods to 10-minute run time.

Warm-Up & Intermissions:

- A 4-minute warm-up will begin once the Zamboni doors have closed.
- If the game start is delayed, the warm-up may be shortened at the discretion of the Executive or Referee.
- Teams will have a 1-minute timed break between periods.

Icing Rule:

- The center ice red line will be used for icing infractions only.

7. Puck Contact and Slap Shot Rules

Goaltender Mask Contact Rule

- **Direct Contact:** If a puck makes *direct contact* with the goaltender's mask or helmet — such as a shot that hits the mask cleanly — play to be stopped by the referee.
- **Indirect Contact:** If the puck makes *indirect contact* with the mask — for example, deflecting off another player, the goalie's own body, or equipment (e.g., glove, pad, chest) before reaching the mask — play will continue at the discretion of the referee.
- **Intentional Use of Rule:** If a goaltender *intentionally redirects or deflects the puck* onto their mask in an attempt to stop play, the whistle will not be blown, and play will continue. Referees will use their judgment to identify intentional actions and uphold the integrity of the game.
- **Goals Off the Mask:** If a puck deflects off the goalie's mask and enters the net, the goal will count, unless the initial contact was a direct shot to the mask, in which case play should have been stopped prior to the goal.

This rule is designed to protect goaltenders from direct head impacts while ensuring fair and consistent gameplay. Referees will continue to use their best judgement

Slap Shot Restrictions:

Slap shots are permitted **only** in **Division 1 and Division 2** —defined as any shot where the blade of the stick rises above the shooter's knee on the backswing.

Players in all other Divisions who attempt a slap shot will receive a **two-minute minor penalty**, as determined by the referee.

8. Substitution and Forfeit Policy

Minimum Players & Forfeits

- A team must have at least 5 skaters to begin a game. If not, the game will be marked as a forfeit by the referee.
- If a team does not have a goaltender, they may play with 6 skaters, but one skater must remain behind the defensive blue line at all times. Nets must remain in their standard position and must not be turned around.
- In the event of a forfeit, the scheduled ice time may still be used for a scrimmage involving insured league members.

Skater Substitutions

- Teams may borrow skaters from another team within the same Division or one Division below to avoid a forfeit or to supplement a short bench.
- The total number of skaters on the bench (including substitutes) must not exceed 9.
- **A team must have a majority of its own rostered skaters to avoid a forfeit.**
- All substitute skaters must be listed on the game sheet prior to puck drop.
- Substitute skaters should wear their own team jersey. If there is a colour conflict, the Team Rep is responsible for providing an alternate jersey.

Goaltender Substitutions

- Teams may only use a substitute goalie from the same Division or a lower Division, unless otherwise approved by the Executive.
- Exception: Division 7 teams may use a Division 6 goalie if no Division 7 goalie is available.
- The substitute goalie's name must be recorded on the game sheet before the game begins.
- With advance notice, the league may be able to provide basic goalie equipment for players filling in as goaltenders

PLAYOFF Substitutions

- No **skater** substitutions are permitted during playoffs.

9. Penalties and Ejections

Any player who receives **three (3) penalties in a single game** will be **ejected for the remainder of that game**. If the same player receives three penalties in a game on a subsequent occasion, they will be ejected and also receive a **one-game suspension**.

10. Complaint Process

- All formal complaints must be submitted via email using the official **HWHL Incident/Complaint Form**.
- Complaints will be reviewed and investigated by a designated committee of the HWHL Executive.
- Participants are encouraged to observe a **24-hour reflection period** before submitting a complaint. This helps ensure concerns are addressed thoughtfully and constructively, rather than in the heat of the moment.

11. Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Action

Any **unsportsmanlike conduct or inappropriate behavior**—whether in person, in writing, or via social media—will be subject to disciplinary action by the HWHL Executive Committee.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Bullying
- Derogatory or offensive comments
- Use of extreme or vulgar profanity
- Disrespectful behavior toward players, coaches, bench staff, referees, or any league member

Disciplinary Procedure:

1. **First Offense:** Upon written report and verification, the member may receive a warning or suspension, depending on the severity of the behavior.
2. **Second Offense:** Will result in **immediate, permanent removal from the league** without refund.

All disciplinary actions will be formally documented and signed by both the President and Vice President of the HWHL.

12. Player and Team Placement

The HWHL reserves the right to reassign individual participants or entire teams after the season begins if their skill level is determined to be significantly above or below the Division to which they were originally assigned.

To help ensure fair and balanced competition, **New Participant Evaluations** are conducted prior to the start of the season. These evaluations assist in minimizing the need for mid-season adjustments.

If a participant does not attend the evaluation session, the HWHL will monitor their gameplay during the season and may recommend a Division adjustment if necessary.

13. Jersey Policy

League-issued jerseys are provided to all players and remain the property of the HWHL.

All jerseys must be returned at the end of the season.

Failure to return a jersey will result in the player being ineligible for future registration until a **\$75 replacement fee** is paid in full.

14. Refund Policy

Refunds after the start of the season will only be considered if a player sustains a **season-ending injury** or develops a **medical condition** that prevents further participation.

To request a refund, the following must be submitted to the HWHL Executive:

1. A completed **HWHL Refund Form**
2. A **Doctor's note** confirming the medical condition
3. The return of the **team jersey**

Once all required documentation is received, the request will be reviewed, and a **prorated refund minus a \$50 admin fee** may be issued based on the date the conditions were met.

Important:

No refund requests will be accepted **after November 30th** of the current season.

15. New CARHA Rule – End-Zone Face-Off Procedure

In accordance with updated CARHA regulations, the following rule now applies to stoppages of play in the end-zone:

- **Face-Off Location:**

Any stoppage of play in the end-zone—caused by the puck going out of play or becoming unplayable—will result in a face-off **in that same end-zone**, at the face-off dot **closest to where the puck was last legally played**, regardless of which team caused the stoppage.

Key Points to Remember:

- If an **attacking player** causes the puck to go out of play or become unplayable in the end-zone, the face-off will **still occur in the attacking zone**, unless the attacking team is assessed a penalty or commits another infraction.
- This rule **only applies** when the puck was legally in the attacking zone prior to the stoppage.
- It **does not apply** if the puck was shot from the neutral or defending zone and goes out of play in the attacking zone.