

USA Youth Boys Lacrosse Rules – Coaches and Admin

Preface

Youth lacrosse is intentionally different from high school and beyond. At the youth level, the priority is **safety, development, and teaching fundamentals** before adding more contact or advanced physical play. This spring, our league is following **USA Lacrosse youth rules** to ensure consistency, simplicity, and alignment with teams from other areas. This full document has examples to help in the understanding of the rules and drills to teach players how to play without committing penalties.

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Youth Boys Lacrosse Rules – By Age Division

1. Youth Rules Summary

PCLA	Body Check	Stick Check	Penalty	Scrum	One Pass	Players	Other Division Specific Rules
K-2	No	Limited	Remove	Yes	Yes	5v5 No Goalie	No Offside, Face-off at beginning of halves, coaches allowed on the field
3-4	No	Limited	Remove	Yes	Yes	7v7 with Goalie	Offside, Face-off at beginning of halves and after goals, no coaches on the field
5-6	No	Limited	Time	No	No	10v10 with Goalie	Offside, Face-off at beginning of halves and after goals, no coaches on the field
7-8	Yes	Full	Time	No	No	10v10 with Goalie	Offside, Face-off at beginning of halves and after goals, no coaches on the field

2. Timeouts

Timeout Rules

- 14U → 2 per half
- 12U → 2 per half
- 10U → 2 per half
- 8U → 0 timeouts

3. Timeout Rules

- The clock DOES NOT stop during a timeout, even in a running-clock game. THIS IS A PCLA RULE.
- Timeouts CANNOT BE CALLED in the last two minutes of the game. THIS IS A PCLA RULE.
- Unused timeouts do not carry over.
- Timeouts may be called by the team in possession or by the defense during a dead ball.
- No age group has special restrictions



Youth Boys Lacrosse Rules - Body and Stick Checking

USA Lacrosse boys' youth rules **prohibit body checking**. There is no such thing as a legal body check for K-6 players. This game of lacrosse is its own ecosystem—philosophically, mechanically, and tactically different from high school, college, and pro rules. Here is a clean, structured breakdown of *what changes, why it changes, and how it affects coaching, officiating, and player development*. Below is a clear framework that captures how **non-checking boys' youth lacrosse** operates.

Key Body and Stick Check Principles:

- Body checking is **not allowed** K-6. A body check is “forceful contact that displaces a player”. **If the body contact is initiated to move, hit, or displace the opponent, it’s illegal.**

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- Body checking is **allowed** at 7-8 grades. This is according to NFHS rules.
- Limited stick checks are allowed K-6. This permits **only poke checks and controlled downward stick checks that begin below both players' shoulders**, with **no lateral swings, no upward motion, and no checks that create force or body displacement**
- Stick checks are allowed at 7-8 grades per NFHS rules. One handed stick checks are permitted by rule, **BUT HIGHLY DISCOURAGED!**

Youth Boys Lacrosse v High School Rules

1. Contact Philosophy

Category	Youth (No Body Checking)	High School
Purpose	Skill development, safety	Full-contact competitive play
Contact Threshold	Very low	Moderate–high
Intent Standard	<i>Any forceful contact = illegal</i>	Force allowed if legal and controlled

This is not “lighter contact.” It is a **different contact philosophy**.

2. Defensive Coaching Differences

Youth (No Checking)

- Contain, don't collide
- Emphasize approach footwork
- Maintain cushion
- Stick in passing lane
- Guide to low-angle zones
- No “pop,” no shoulder engagement
- Teach patience over physicality

High School

- Close the gap aggressively
- Legal bumping and driving through contact
- More physical crease defense
- More disruptive ground-ball play

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- Slide packages assume contact
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3. Officiating Differences

Youth

- Safety-first enforcement
- Lower threshold for personal fouls
- Quick whistle on dangerous contact
- Officials often verbal-coach (“easy”, “no body”)
- Intent matters less than outcome

High School

- Higher tolerance for physical play
- More advantage/flow allowed
- Officials expect players to absorb contact
- Fouls judged more on legality than risk

4. Game Flow Differences

Youth

- Cleaner transitions
- More successful dodging
- Less chaos on ground balls
- More emphasis on stick skills
- Players stay upright more often
- Off-ball movement matters more than physicality

High School

- More turnovers from contact
 - More contested ground balls
 - Dodges require stronger protection
 - Physical mismatches influence matchups
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5. Developmental Rationale

Why Youth Lacrosse Removes Body Checking

- Prevents early injury patterns
- Builds confidence in smaller/late-developing players
- Teaches technique before force
- Reduces fear-based play
- Keeps more kids in the sport
- Creates a safer, more predictable environment

Long-Term Benefit

Players who master **footwork, angles, stick position, and spacing** at youth levels become **better defenders** when checking is introduced.

6. What Contact IS Allowed without Body Checking

Even in non-checking divisions, contact isn't removed—it's *controlled*.

- **Equal pressure** (hands together, no extension)
- **Box-out contact**
- **Incidental contact while playing the ball**
- **Approach contact** (closing space without delivering force)
- **Stick checks** (controlled, on the stick or gloved hands) Must be poke and lift or downward below both players shoulders.

7. Preventing the attacker from advancing

Legal defensive tools that stop progress WITHOUT using illegal force

a. Angles

The defender wins the geometry, not the collision.

- Defender beats the attacker to the spot.
- Defender's hips and stick "close" the lane.
- The attacker sees no path and must redirect.

Key: The attacker stops because the **lane is gone**, not because the defender's body moved him. This is the primary legal way to stop a drive.

b. Stick position

The stick takes away the front door.

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- Defender's stick is out front, angled to block the preferred lane.
- Attacker cannot drive through the stick legally.
- Attacker must slow, redirect, or pull away.

Key: The stick, not the body, is the barrier.

c. Footwork + Parallel Body Position

The defender stays in front without leaning or driving.

- Defender mirrors the attacker's steps.
- Defender stays parallel, shoulder next to shoulder.
- Defender maintains **equal pressure** (shared, non-forceful contact).
- Attacker cannot physically run through a defender who is already occupying the space.

Key: The defender is not "pushing back." The defender is simply **already there**.

8. What Contact is NOT Allowed

This is where youth rules diverge sharply from HS/college/pro.

- **Body checks of any kind**
- **Take-out checks**
- **High-speed collisions**
- **Checks that start above the shoulders**
- **Any hit delivered with force, even if "legal" at older levels**
- **Defensive "finishing" of a play with contact**
- **Hitting a player who is passing or shooting**
- **Making contact with an attacking player that moves the player's body**
- **Making contact with a defending player that moves the player's body**

9. More than equal pressure (ILLEGAL)

Any contact where the defender uses **force, leverage, or body weight** to move, redirect, or impede the ball carrier.

What It Looks Like

- Defender leans their shoulder into the attacker.
- Defender steps **into** the attacker's path instead of staying parallel.
- Defender uses their body to "wall off" or "bump" the attacker.
- Defender's hands separate or extend.
- Defender's hips or torso **initiate** contact.
- Attacker's path, balance, or speed changes because of the defender's body.

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Key Characteristics

- **Displacement** occurs (even small).
- Defender's body **initiates** the contact.
- Attacker is **moved**, not just influenced.

10. How This Changes Defensive Coaching

Youth defenders must learn:

a. Approach Footwork

- Break down early
- Maintain cushion
- Keep hips square
- Avoid over-running the approach

b. Stick-First Defense

- Lead with stick position
- Disrupt hands
- Attack the stick head, not the body

c. Contain Instead of Collide

- Guide the ball carrier without applying force to the body
- Angle to the sideline
- Use body position, not body force

d. Controlled Engagement

- Hands together
- No extension
- No "pop" or "lift" through contact

This is why youth lacrosse produces better long-term defenders when taught correctly, players learn *technique before force*.

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Examples of Legal vs. Illegal Contact in Youth Boys Lacrosse (No Body Checking)

1. Ground Ball Situations

LEGAL

Two players approach a ground ball side-by-side. Both slow down, lower their hips, and apply **equal pressure** shoulder-to-shoulder while scooping. Neither extends their arms or drives through the opponent.

Why legal: Equal pressure, incidental, both playing the ball.

ILLEGAL

A player sprints at full speed toward an opponent who is bending to scoop a ground ball and knocks him over.

Why illegal: High-speed collision, forceful displacement, dangerous angle.

2. On-Ball Defense

LEGAL

Defender approaches under control, breaks down, keeps hands together, and uses his stick to steer the ball carrier toward the sideline. There may be light body contact, but no force. You cannot lean on or drive a player while making body contact.

Why legal: Controlled engagement, stick-first defense, no attempt to move the opponent with the body.

ILLEGAL

Defender steps into the ball carrier with a shoulder bump to stop the dodge. Even if it's a "soft" bump, the intent is to displace.

Why illegal: Any body-initiated displacement = body check.

3. Off-Ball Defense

LEGAL

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Defender uses light, stationary body presence to maintain position between the cutter and the goal. Hands together, no extension, no driving through.

Why legal: Positioning, not force.

✗ ILLEGAL

Defender extends arms or steps into a cutter to knock him off his route.

Why illegal: Extension + force = illegal body check.

4. Offensive Dodging

✓ Legal

Protecting the stick with the off-arm (arm bent, no extension). Incidental shoulder brushing while dodging. Using footwork and stick skills to create space. Changing speed and direction to beat the defender. The attacker bumps the defender to start a dodge or to get separation.

Why legal: Any body-initiated displacement = body check.

✗ Not legal

Using the off-arm to push. Using the shoulder to drive into the defender. Using body weight to displace the defender. Running through established position

Why illegal: Extension + force = illegal body check.

5. Boxing Out

✓ LEGAL

Player boxes out on a loose ball using a wide base and light back-pressure. No shove, no sudden movement, no force.

Why legal: Equal pressure, controlled, playing the ball.

✗ ILLEGAL

Player uses a backward shove to push an opponent away from the ball.

Why illegal: Forceful displacement.

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6. Stick Checks

✓ LEGAL

Defender checks the opponent's stick or gloved hands with a controlled poke or lift. Stick checks must be initiated below both players shoulders.

Why legal: Stick-to-stick or stick-to-glove contact is allowed.

✗ ILLEGAL

Defender swings through the opponent's hands with excessive force or checks the opponent's arm, ribs, or back.

Why illegal: Dangerous contact + hitting the body instead of the stick.

7. Approaching a Shooter or Passer

✓ LEGAL

Defender closes space with stick up, arrives under control, and disrupts the shot by checking the stick head. No body contact beyond incidental brushing.

Why legal: Stick-first, controlled, no force.

✗ ILLEGAL

Defender "finishes" the play by stepping into the shooter after the ball is released. Even a mild bump is illegal at youth levels.

Why illegal: Late contact + force = body check.

8. Crease Defense

✓ LEGAL

Defender holds position on the crease with light body presence and active stick. No pushing, no driving attackers out.

Why legal: Positioning, not force.

✗ ILLEGAL

Defender uses a shoulder or hip to knock an attacker off the crease area.

Why illegal: Any intentional displacement = body check.

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9. Transition / Fast Breaks

✓ LEGAL

Defender angles the ball carrier toward the sideline using footwork and stick pressure. Incidental shoulder brushing is fine.

Why legal: No force, no attempt to knock down.

✗ ILLEGAL

Defender steps into the lane and delivers a body hit to stop the fast break.

Why illegal: High-speed collision, forceful contact.

Youth Lacrosse Contact-Safe Drill Package

MODULE 1 — APPROACH & BREAKDOWN

Drill 1: Controlled Close-Outs

Purpose: Teach defenders to approach under control without initiating contact.

Setup:

- 1 attacker with a ball, 1 defender, 10–12 yards apart.
- Cones mark the “breakdown zone” at 4 yards.

Execution:

1. Defender sprints to the breakdown cone.
2. At the cone, defender must:
 - Lower hips
 - Hands together
 - Stick out front
 - No body contact
3. Attacker performs light dodges; defender mirrors.

Coaching Points:

- “Slow down before you arrive.”
- “Stick leads, body follows.”

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- “No shoulder, no bump.”

Common Illegal Contact to Correct:

- Defender stepping into attacker’s chest
 - Defender using shoulder to stop dodge
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MODULE 2 — LEGAL POSITIONING & EQUAL PRESSURE

Drill 2: Shadow & Guide

Purpose: Teach defenders to guide, not hit.

Setup:

- 1v1 in a 10x10 yard box.

Execution:

- Attacker moves freely.
- Defender must stay parallel, using stick and footwork to “guide” attacker.
- Light shoulder brushing is allowed; force is not.

Coaching Points:

- “Stay square.”
- “Guide, don’t drive.”
- “Equal pressure only.”

Illegal Contact to Correct:

- Defender stepping into attacker’s path
 - Defender extending arms
-

MODULE 3 — GROUND BALL SAFETY

Drill 3: Equal-Pressure GBs

Purpose: Teach legal box-outs and safe loose-ball play.

Setup:

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- Two players start 5 yards from a ball.

Execution:

1. Coach rolls ball out.
2. Players approach at controlled speed.
3. Players may:
 - Lower hips
 - Use shoulder-to-shoulder equal pressure
 - Box out
4. Players may NOT:
 - Push
 - Extend arms
 - Knock down opponent

Coaching Points:

- “Match speed—don’t crash.”
- “Shoulder next to shoulder, not into shoulder.”
- “Win space, not bodies.”

Illegal Contact to Correct:

- High-speed collisions
- Shoves
- Taking opponent off feet

MODULE 4 — STICK-FIRST DEFENSE

Drill 4: Stick-to-Stick Only

Purpose: Reinforce legal stick checks and eliminate body-initiated contact.

Setup:

- 1v1 stationary or slow-movement reps.

Execution:

- Defender may only:
 - Poke
 - Lift
 - Tap

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- All checks must target stick head or gloved hands.
- Defender must avoid:
 - Arms
 - Ribs
 - Back
 - Helmet

Coaching Points:

- “Eyes on the stick head.”
- “Short, controlled checks.”
- “No swinging.”

Illegal Contact to Correct:

- Stick to body
- Wild swings
- Checks delivered with force

MODULE 5 — CREASE DEFENSE WITHOUT CONTACT

Drill 5: Vertical Wall

Purpose: Teach crease defenders to hold position without pushing.

Setup:

- Attacker starts 3 yards from crease.
- Defender on crease line.

Execution:

- Attacker tries to cut across crease.
- Defender must:
 - Maintain vertical position
 - Keep hands together
 - Move feet
 - Avoid initiating contact
- Defender may NOT:
 - Hip check
 - Shoulder bump
 - Step into cutter

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Coaching Points:

- “Hold space, don’t take space.”
- “Feet first, body last.”
- “No displacement.”

Illegal Contact to Correct:

- Defender knocking cutter off route
 - Defender extending arms
-

MODULE 6 — TRANSITION ANGLES

Drill 6: Sideline Funnel

Purpose: Teach defenders to angle ball carriers without hitting.

Setup:

- 20-yard lane with cones.
- Attacker runs full speed.
- Defender starts 5 yards behind and inside.

Execution:

- Defender uses angle + stick to funnel attacker to sideline.
- No body contact allowed beyond incidental brushing.

Coaching Points:

- “Win the angle, not the collision.”
- “Stick leads the funnel.”
- “No stepping into the lane.”

Illegal Contact to Correct:

- Defender body-blocking
 - Defender stepping into path
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MODULE 7 — SHOOTER APPROACH

Drill 7: Stick Disrupt, Don't Hit

Purpose: Teach defenders how to pressure shooters safely.

Setup:

- Shooter at 12 yards.
- Defender starts 5 yards away.

Execution:

- Shooter winds up.
- Defender closes space and checks stick head.
- Defender must avoid all body contact.

Coaching Points:

- “Arrive under control.”
- “Stick to stick.”
- “No finishing the play.”

Illegal Contact to Correct:

- Defender bumping shooter after release
 - Defender stepping into shooter
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MODULE 8 — TEAM CONTACT IQ

Drill 8: Legal/Illegal Walkthrough

Purpose: Build team-wide clarity on what refs call.

Setup:

- Coach demonstrates scenarios at half-speed.
- Players call out “LEGAL” or “ILLEGAL.”

Scenarios:

- Equal-pressure box out
- Shoulder bump
- Stick to glove

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- Stick to ribs
- Angling to sideline
- Stepping into path
- Incidental brushing
- High-speed collision

Coaching Points:

- “If it moves the opponent, it’s illegal.”
 - “If it’s stick-first and controlled, it’s legal.”
-



Youth Boys Lacrosse Penalties

Personal Fouls

These fouls are those of a serious nature. They include either safety or sportsmanship violations.

PENALTY: The penalty for a personal foul shall be a 1,2-, or 3-minute non-releasable penalty depending on the official’s discretion and severity of the foul.

- CROSS-CHECK
- ILLEGAL BODY CHECK AND CHECKS INVOLVING THE HEAD/ NECK
- TARGETING
- ILLEGAL CROSSE
- USE OF ILLEGAL EQUIPMENT
- SLASHING
- TRIPPING
- UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS
- UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT
- FOULING OUT
- EJECTION
- MISCONDUCT

Technical Fouls

These fouls are those of a less serious nature and involve players being illegally disadvantaged or gaining an unfair advantage over another player.

PENALTY:

Loss of Possession - If there is a loose ball or if the team in possession commits the foul, the offended team will get possession of the ball.

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Time Serving Penalty - If a team has possession of the ball the offending player shall sit in the penalty area for 30 seconds, non-releasable.

- CREASE VIOLATIONS/GOALKEEPER INTERFERENCE
- HOLDING
- ILLEGAL OFFENSIVE SCREENING
- ILLEGAL PROCEDURE
- CONDUCT FOUL
- INTERFERENCE
- PUSHING
- WARDING OFF
- WITHHOLDING BALL FROM PLAY