



PLAYING RULES POINTS OF EMPHASIS

2025 through 2029 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 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.

USA Hockey does not tolerate any abusive behavior, including racial and other derogatory slurs directed at players, coaches and officials. All participants are reminded that any language that is hateful or discriminatory in nature will be penalized with an automatic match penalty.

Abuse of officials is a continuing problem at all levels of play, and as a result the retention of officials in all youth sports has become a significant issue that affects the quality and number of available officials. USA Hockey is committed to taking a leadership role in this area and has in place a Zero Tolerance Policy towards unsportsmanlike behavior. Officials are required to strictly enforce all actions that are deemed to be abusive in nature in an effort to change the culture of what is deemed to be acceptable behavior when it comes to respect for officials.

Player Safety

Intimidation tactics have no place in ice hockey. These tactics include any contact to the head of the opponent, checking from behind and late body checks to an opponent who is no longer in 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 Competitive Contact categories, legal competitive 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, punishment or to a vulnerable or defenseless opponent, a major plus game misconduct penalty should be assessed to the offending player.

In Body Checking categories, the primary focus of the check shall be to gain possession of the puck and officials should strictly penalize any illegal actions such as boarding, charging, cross checking, and a late body check to a player who is no longer in control of the puck.

The responsibility is on the player delivering the check to avoid forceful contact (minimize impact) to a vulnerable or defenseless player who is no longer in control of the puck.

Proper body checking technique starts with stick on puck, therefore the stick blade of the player delivering the check must be below the knees.

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 physical 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 competitive contact.

Officials should be diligent and confident when officiating the sport. Each official should 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 levels of the participants to determine the outcome of a game and to increase participant enjoyment.

USA Hockey will also continue to emphasize the Body Checking Standard of Play and Rule Emphasis adopted in 2011 as part of its effort to create a safe environment for all participants. The goal is to enhance player skill development by eliminating intimidating infractions designed to punish the opponent. Proper enforcement of this standard will improve the proper skill of legal body checking or legal competitive contact at all levels of play.

Conclusion

Hockey should be enjoyed by all participants. To that end, all participants and spectators should observe a level of personal behavior that demonstrates respect for all. USA Hockey 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.