



2021-22 Edition

USA Hockey Playing Rules Committee
NFHS Playing Rules Committee

(updated 9/13/2021 with 2021-25 USA Hockey, 2021-22 NFHS and 2020-22 NCAA Rules)

Rule (Situation)	Dif	USA Hockey (HS & Below)	N F H S	N C A A
SECTION 1 - RINK				
Goalkeeper warm-up area defined	U	Expanded Privileged Area	No rule	No rule
Maximum non-players on bench	X	Four (4)	Five (5)	Eight (8) [Bench Minor after warning]
Goal Crease shape	U	6 ft. semi-circle	Truncated semi-circle	Truncated semi-circle
Face-Off Circle Hash Mark Distance	N	4 Feet	4 Feet	Recommended 5'-7"
Goal Peg Requirement	N	Recommended to be anchored	Recommended to be anchored	8-10" in Depth (limited waiver)
No Tobacco/Alcohol/Vaping on ice or bench	N	Game Misconduct	Game Misconduct	Ejection from game (tobacco)
Flexible Goal Pegs	N	Recommended	Recommended	Mandated
SECTION 2 - COMPOSITION OF TEAMS				
Maximum players in uniform	X	Maximum 20 total, maximum 18 skaters	Maximum 20, including goalkeepers	Maximum 19 players; 2 or 3 goalkeepers (non-exhibition games)
Captains and Alternates	X	Captain + 2 Alternates (max.)	Max. 3 (any combination)	Captain and Designated Alt.
Visiting team wears dark uniforms	U	No rule	Yes	Yes
Logo limitations on uniform	U	None	Yes (logos, flags, memorial patch)	Yes (logo restrictions only)
Captain coming off bench to complain	X	All- Minor	(1) - Minor; (2) - Misconduct; (3) - Game Misconduct; (4) - Game Disqualification	(1) - Misconduct (2) - Game Misconduct
Captains and Referees meet before game	U	No rule	Required	Required
More than game roster limit on the ice during the pre-game warm-up	X	No rule - implied only rostered players may be on the ice	Permitted	Maximum 20 players plus 3 goalkeepers



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Coach meets officials before game	F	Not required	Required and verifies proper equipment	Not required
Roster correction after game begins	X	Allowed - Bench Minor penalty	OK if inadvertent only; minor penalty assessed	Not permitted; Bench Minor penalty assessed
Jersey number in addition to back	X	No rule	Both sleeves	Front or both sleeves
"Temporary" goalkeeper	U	Permitted	No rule	No rule
Goalkeeper substitution during stoppage	N	Return after next stoppage	Return after next stoppage	No rule
Not starting with announced lineup	N	Permitted	Permitted	Bench Minor penalty
Retiring player location for legal change	N	At the bench	At the bench	Within 5 ft. of the bench
Pucks on ice before start of second or third periods	N	No rule	No rule	Charged with time-out; Bench Minor if time-out already used
Recovery time for injured goalkeeper	U	None	"Reasonable amount of time"	"Reasonable time"
Team huddles before 2 nd or 3 rd period	U	No rule	Minor	Bench Minor
Concussion/Unconscious player rule (requires health care professional OK to resume play)	U	See USAH Concussion Return to Play Policy	Required	Required
Stoppage for injured player	F	Immediate when their team has possession	Immediate (regardless of possession)	Immediate when their team has possession
SECTION 3 – EQUIPMENT				
Hollow end of stick must be covered	N	Yes	Yes	No rule
Max. widened portion of GK stick shaft	U	26 inches	28 inches	28 inches
Throat protector – Goalkeeper	F	Recommended	Required	Recommended
Throat protector – Player	N	Recommended	Recommended	Not required
HECC-approved helmet	N	Required	Required	Players – Required Goalkeepers- Recommended
Wearing helmet on players' and penalty bench	N	Required. Violation - Misc.	Required. Violation - Misc.	Required. Violation-Ben. Minor
Helmet chinstrap length restriction	N	Implied	Implied	Two fingers



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Required Protective Equipment – Player	X	Helmet/Facemask Skates Mouthguard (12&U and Older) Player Personally responsible for all other recommended protective equipment	Helmet/Facemask Skates Gloves Padded Hockey Pants Protective Cup /Pelvic Protector Shin Guards Elbow Pads Shoulder Pads Tooth and Mouth Protector 1 st Offense - Misconduct Return – Game Misconduct	Helmet/Facemask Skates Player personally responsible for all other protective equipment. 1 st offense - Not permitted to participate. 2 nd offense – Misconduct . 3 rd offense – Game Misconduct
Torn, ripped, unzipped pants	U	No rule	Not permitted	Not permitted
Mouthguard - non-clear color	N	Required	Required	No rule
Goalkeeper may play with broken stick	N	Not permitted	Not permitted	OK until next stoppage
Goalkeeper glove falls off during play	X	Play stopped if vulnerable and no imminent scoring opportunity	Play stopped immediately	No rule
Casts / splints	N	OK if adequately covered and physician approved	OK if adequately covered and physician approved	No rule
Wearing exposed jewelry	U	Not permitted	(1) Misc. (2) Game Misc.	(1) Misc. (2) Game Misc.
Equipment request limitation	U	Anything in Section 3 which has specifications	Sticks	Sticks
Location of logos on puck	N	No rule	No rule	Limited position
Electronic equipment – dispute ruling	F	Bench Minor	Not permitted (no penalty)	Bench Minor
Electronic equipment - player on the ice	X	Bench Minor; equip. removed	1 st Offense - Misconduct 2 nd Offense- Game Misconduct	No rule
Video usage on bench (coaching purposes)	N	Permitted	Permitted	Bench Minor



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SECTION 4 - PENALTIES				
Bench Minor penalty defined	F	Yes	No rule (Captain's Choice of players on the ice at stoppage for serving penalties)	Yes
Penalty Length – minor, major, misconduct	U	May be shortened based on length of period	Standard length	Standard length
Who serves "Bench Minor" (NFHS equivalent)	X	Player on ice at infraction	Player on ice at stoppage	Any non-penalized player
Coincident minor penalty rule	N	Equal number of minors offset	Equal number of minors offset	Equal number of minors offset unless teams at full strength
Minor penalty termination when scored upon	N	First minor being served	First minor being served	Minor causing short-handed at time of goal
Goal scored during delayed minor penalty to a team at even strength or on power play	N	Delayed penalty not served	Delayed penalty not served	Penalty is assessed
Major penalties	U	All majors carry game misconduct	Stand-alone major penalty option	Stand-alone major penalty option
Player/GK ejected after second major	N	Yes, plus 2 game suspension	Yes	No
Game suspension for Game Misconduct	U	Yes	No	No
2 nd Misconduct by Player in game	U	Game Misconduct	No rule	No rule
Penalty maximum/game (player/GK); Penalty maximum/game (coach)	X U	Yes-4 (Game Misconduct) Yes-12 (Next game suspension)	Yes-5 (Game Misconduct) No	No No
Suspended Coach/Player behavior	U	Outlined with specific limitations	No rule	No rule
Progressive suspension	X	Yes (Fighting and aggressive major penalties)	Yes (Disqualification Penalty)	Yes (Disqualification & Game Misconduct Penalties)
Standardized discipline for Match Penalties	U	Recommended	DQ-Minimum one game	DQ-Minimum one game



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Match (DQ) penalty to non-player	N	Applies	Applies	No rule
Maximum Match/DQ per player per game	F	No limit	One	No limit
Goalkeeper must remain in Privileged Area throughout Penalty Shot attempt	N	Not required	Not required	Yes
Who takes Penalty Shot if player selected is injured or ejected	X	Any teammate on the ice at the time of infraction	Any teammate on the ice when play stopped	(Ejection) Any teammate not then serving a penalty (Injury) Any teammate on the ice at time of infraction
Goalkeeper must serve their own major and/or misconduct penalties	U	No	Yes	Yes
Requires the recording of any delayed penalty nullified by a goal being scored	N	Yes	Yes	No
SECTION 5 – OFFICIALS				
Approved Officiating systems	X	RR, RLL or 2R-2L (not RRL)	RR, RRL, or 2R-2L	2R-2L RRL (Women's Hockey Only)
Adjustment when one official is unable to continue	X	(4 to 3) 2R-2L to RLL (3 to 2) RLL to RL or 2R (2 to 1) 2R - Emergency Official Rule	(4 to 3) 2R-2L to RRL (3 to 2) RRL to 2R (2 to 1) 2R to R	(4 to 3) if R: 2R-2L to RLL (4 to 3) if L: 2R-2L to RRL (3 to 2) RRL – Conference Rule
Linesman report unobserved MINOR pen. to Ref.	X	"Injury Potential" minors only	Yes	No
Face-offs - Start of periods and after goals (who conducts the face-off)	X	Referee	Referee; Linesman option	Linesman
Half-shield facemask required for Officials	N	Yes	Yes	No



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SECTION 6 - PLAYING RULES				
Awarded goal for certain Penalty Shot situation if goalkeeper is not on the ice: - Falling on or picking up puck in crease	U	Awarded Goal	Penalty Shot only	Penalty Shot only
Verbally abusing Official after game – player	X	Misconduct or Game Misconduct.	Disqualification	Misconduct, Game Misconduct or Disqualification
Foul language on players' bench – player	X	Bench Minor; Misconduct if player is identifiable	Minor + Misconduct	Minor, Misconduct, Game Misconduct or Disqualification
Banging boards from players' bench	U	Bench Minor if done as means to celebrate body check	No rule	No rule
Continuing altercation	X	Misconduct or Game Misconduct.	Disqualification	Misconduct, Game Misconduct or Disqualification
Touching/Holding Game Official – player	U	Misconduct or Game Misconduct.	Disqualification	Disqualification
Obscene Gesture – player	X	Game Misconduct	Minor + Game Misconduct. or Disqualification	Misconduct, Game Misconduct or Disqualification
Hateful or Discriminatory Language	N	Match Penalty	Disqualification	Game Misconduct
“Detrimental Conduct” – player or Team Official	N	Match	Disqualification	Game Misconduct
Verbal abuse to Game Official after game by Team Official	X	(1) Bench Minor, (2) Game Misc.; Match if threat	Disqualification	Game Misconduct or Supplementary Discipline
Obscene Gesture by Team Official	X	Game Misconduct	Minor + Game Misconduct	Bench Minor
Thrown object onto the ice	N	Bench Minor	Minor	Player: Minor + Game Misc. Coach: Bench Minor + G.Misc.
Non-physical interference with On-Ice Officials	N	Misconduct	Misconduct	Player: Misc. or Game Misc.
Touching/Holding Game Official by Team Official	X	Game Misconduct	Disqualification	Bench Minor or Game Misconduct



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Boarding	X	Minor + Misconduct, Major + Game Misconduct. or Match	Major, Major + Misconduct or Disqualification	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Body Checking (Competitive Contact Classifications)	U	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major or DQ
Goalkeeper playing with a broken stick	N	Not permitted - Minor	Not permitted – Minor	OK until next stoppage
Butt-Ending	X	Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Disqualification	Major + Game Misc. or DQ
Charging	X	Minor + Misconduct, Major + Game Misconduct. or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Checking from Behind	X	Minor + Misconduct, Major + Game Misconduct, or Match; 5+GM or Match req'd if head-first into boards or goal	Major - Open ice Major + Misconduct or DQ if into boards or goal	Minor or Major (open ice) Major + Game Misconduct or DQ req'd if into boards or goal
Contact to the Head / Head Contact	X	Minor + Misconduct, Major + Game Misconduct. or Match	Minor, Major or DQ (Indirect) Major or DQ (Direct)	(Direct) Major + Game Misc. or DQ
Cross-Checking	X	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Delay of Game	U	GK must be in "act of playing goal" to freeze the puck	GK allowed to freeze puck in privileged area / above goal line	GK allowed to freeze puck in privileged area / above goal line
Elbowing	X	Minor, Major or Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Players must be stationary for face-off	U	No	Yes	Yes
Player/Line change at stoppage	N	5 seconds each for visitor and home team	5 seconds each for visitor and home team	5 seconds for visiting team and 8 seconds for home team
Player change after accidental goal dislodged by defending team	N	Permitted	Permitted	Not permitted
Player change after team shoots puck over glass and out of play in defending zone	N	Permitted	Permitted	Not permitted



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Player change after team ices the puck	N	Permitted	Permitted	Not permitted
Face-off location after non-coincident penalty	U	Offending team's defending zone unless stoppage caused by non-offending team.	Offending team's defending zone	Offending team's defending zone
Face-off location for carrying /throwing or illegal hand passing puck	X	Neutral zone or last play	Defending zone	One zone closer to own goal
Face-off location for playing puck above shoulders	N	Defending zone (offending team)	Defending zone (offending team)	One zone closer to own goal
End zone face-off after icing or after penalty creating a shorthanded situation	N	Officials determine spot	Officials determine spot	Non-offending team may choose which spot
Face-offs procedure – who places stick first?	N	Attacking center; Visiting team center ice	Attacking center; Visiting team center ice	Defending center in defending zone; otherwise Visiting team
First violation at a face-off	N	Center ejected	Center ejected	Warning only
Hand pass permitted	N	Defending zone only	Defending zone only	No
Player change after hand pass stoppage	N	Permitted	Permitted	Not permitted in defending zone
Hand pass by face-off player	N	No rule	No rule	Not permitted – minor penalty
Immediate whistle for hand pass directly on goal	F	No	Yes	No
Goalkeeper shoots puck out of rink over glass	U	Minor - Always	Minor – If deliberate	Minor – If deliberate
Instigating Fisticuffs	F	Minor	No special rule	Minor
Fisticuffs, including player struck during altercation who continues by retaliating	U	Minor, Double Minor, or Major + Game Misconduct	Disqualification	Disqualification
Subsequent player enters altercation (fight)	X	First in - Game Misconduct; Others - no automatic penalty	Disqualification	No automatic penalty
Deliberately removing helmet/facemask prior to or during altercation	U	Match	No rule	No rule
Unintentionally removing opponent helmet/facemask during altercation	U	Game Misconduct (2-game suspension)	No rule	No rule
Own helmet/facemask comes off head during altercation (improper wearing)	U	Game Misconduct	No rule	No rule



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Deliberately removing helmet/facemask: (a) during normal play (b) during breakaway or last 2 minutes or OT	X	(a) Minor (b) Penalty Shot	(a) Minor plus Misconduct (b) Misconduct + Penalty Shot	(a) Minor (b) Pen. Shot or Awarded Goal
High Stick definition	U	Above normal shoulder height of checking player	Above 4 feet	Above 4 feet
Goal scored - puck strikes stick below High Stick definition, but part of stick is above that height	U	No Goal	Goal is allowed	Goal is allowed
Immediate whistle for HS puck directly on goal	F	No	Yes	No
Goalkeeper play puck with high stick	N	No	No	Permitted
Grabbing Facemask	X	Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Major, Major + Misconduct or Disqualification	Major + Game Misconduct or Disqualification.
Head-Butting	X	Major + Game Misconduct. or Match	Major, Major + Misconduct or Disqualification	Major + Game Misconduct. or Disqualification
High Sticking	X	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Holding	N	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor
Hooking	X	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor
Shorthanded Team can ice puck	U	HS - Yes 18U & younger - No	Allowed	Allowed
Interference	F	Minor Penalty	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor
Directing puck into goal with skate	N	Disallowed	Disallowed	Goal unless distinct kicking motion
Attacking player in crease when goal scored (goalkeeper is in the crease)	U	No goal	Allowed – No goal if interfering with the goalkeeper	Allowed – No goal if interfering with the goalkeeper
Kicking	U	Major + Game Misconduct (Push-Off) or Match (Kick)	Disqualification	Disqualification



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Kick shot (skate kicks stick blade)	U	Stoppage of play	Misconduct	Misconduct
Kneeing	N	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Player leaves players' bench or penalty bench during altercation	U	Major + Game Misconduct	Disqualification	Disqualification
Extra player prevents breakaway	X	Penalty Shot	Penalty Shot + Misconduct	Bench Minor, Misconduct, and Penalty Shot
Delayed offside permitted	U	HS & Adults – Yes 18U and Younger - No	Yes	Yes
Tag-up to nullify delayed off-side	U	HS & Adults – Yes 18U and Younger - No	Yes	Yes
Offside – Puck deflecting from Neutral Zone off defending player back into Defending zone with attacking player in zone.	N	Delayed offside	Delayed offside	No offside
Immediate whistle for puck shot on goal during delayed offside	U	Yes	No	No
Icing is nullified if goalkeeper leaves crease or feigns playing the puck	N	No	No	Yes
Stoppage of play for icing violation	N	Immediate when puck crosses goal line	Immediate when puck crosses goal line	Hybrid Icing
Icing error	U	End zone spot where occurred	Center spot	Center spot
Carrying puck behind net more than once per period (not being checked)	N	No rule	No rule	Minor
Additional puck on ice	N	Stop only if interferes with play	Stop only if interferes with play	Stop at change of possession
Team refuses to start play when ordered to do so by Referee, after warning	X	After 15 seconds, Bench Minor; After 15 more seconds, Suspend game plus Match Pen.	3 minutes to comply. Major if complying or forfeit if not complying	Progression if continuing: Bench Minor, Major, Forfeiture
Slashing	X	Minor, Major or Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ



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Slew-footing	F	Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Major + Game Misc. or DQ.
Spearing	X	Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Disqualification	Major + Game Misconduct or Disqualification
Thrown stick	U	At puck in Def. Zone or during breakaway: Pen. Shot,	Preventing a goal: Pen. Shot Otherwise: minor	Preventing a goal: Pen. Shot Otherwise: minor
“Mercy Rule” (ending game early)	F	No	Permitted	No
Time of period	X	20 minutes maximum	15 (up to 17 min. by State)	20 minutes
Time-out permitted	U	Before conclusion of line change procedure	Anytime during a stoppage	Anytime during a stoppage
Max. period length, sudden-death overtime	X	10 min. (no resurface)	8 min. (no resurface)	5 min. (no resurface)
Teams change ends for first overtime	U	No rule	Yes	Yes
Overtime player count	X	5v5, 4v4, 3v3 permitted	No rule (state associations set their own rules)	One 3v3 required
Shootout tiebreaker	F	Local League/Tournament Governance with guidelines	No rule	Ok'd for conference games or in-season tournament games after 3v3 overtime
Video review	X	No rule	By State Assoc. adoption only	Yes
Tripping/Clipping/Leg Checking	X	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Unnecessary Roughness	X	Minor or Double Minor	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor
Unnecessary Roughness – avoidable check to vulnerable or defenseless player or after whistle	N	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	Minor, Major or DQ	Minor, Major, Major + Game Misconduct or DQ
Unnecessary Roughness – delivering check with no effort to gain possession of puck and stick is above knees	U	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	No rule	No rule



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Unnecessary Roughness – delivering a check to an opponent who is physically engaged for possession of the puck.	U	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	No rule	No rule
Unnecessary Roughness – GK delivering a body check to an opponent	U	Minor, Major + Game Misconduct or Match	No rule	No rule
Diving rule (Embellishment)	U	No rule	Minor	Minor
GLOSSARY				
Act of playing goal (GK freezing puck)	U	Defined	No rule	No rule
Body Checking	U	Focus is on gaining puck possession, thus the stick must be below the knees of the player delivering the check	Defined as using body to separate opponent from the puck	Defined as using body to separate opponent from the puck
Competitive Contact vs. Body Contact	U	Competitive Contact	Body Contact	Body Contact
Involvement with the puck defined	U	Contact with the puck Possession of the puck Control of the puck	Possession Possession and Control	Possession Possession and Control
SIGNALS and PROCEDURES				
Goal scored - blowing the whistle	N	Yes	Yes	No
Icing signal, non-whistle arm, back official	F	Vertical	60° above horizontal	Vertical
Delayed offside	U	Non-whistle arm vertical (HS and Adult teams only)	Non-whistle arm vertical; whistle arm angled toward line	Non-whistle arm vertical; whistle arm angled toward line

For purposes of this document, a Match Penalty (USAH) and a Disqualification (NFHS & NCAA) are considered identical. Both consist of a 5-minute penalty, immediate ejection from the game, and additional suspension.



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