

Dakota Hockey League (DHL)

Player Handbook | 2026–2027

Welcome to the Dakota Hockey League

The purpose of the Dakota Hockey League is to deliver a sustainable adult recreational program that promotes physical activity, community engagement, and healthy competition. The league provides a consistent, local platform for participants to connect socially, enjoy the game of hockey and maintain active lifestyles. In doing so, it fulfills the organization's mandate for adult programming while ensuring effective utilization of available ice resources.

By participating in the league, all players agree to uphold standards of safety, respect, and sportsmanship both on and off the ice.

In addition to our Player Handbook, we have updated the League Rulebook to further reinforce the league's purpose and provide additional detail on key topics outlined in the Handbook. The complete Dakota Hockey League Rulebook, which governs all league play, is available on our website and should be reviewed by all participants.

Safety First

Player safety is the league's top priority.

- All participants must wear approved equipment as required by league rules
 - Dangerous play, fighting, abuse of officials, or any actions that place others at risk will result in suspension or removal from the league
 - Players are encouraged to report safety concerns involving opponents, teams, or officiating to league management
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Player Expectations

All players are expected to:

- Read, and be familiar with the DHL Rulebook
- Treat teammates, opponents, officials, timekeepers, arena staff, and facilities with respect
- Compete hard while maintaining control and sportsmanship
- Accept referee decisions without abuse or harassment
- Contribute to a positive and inclusive environment
- Understand and follow all league rules and policies
- Acknowledge and sign off after reading this handbook

Note: DHL Management reserves the right to discipline any player whose behavior is deemed detrimental to the league experience.

Team & Player Responsibilities

All Players Are Responsible For:

- Registering through the league's software system prior to participating
- Ensuring their team has enough players or eligible spares, as games will not be rescheduled
- Staying informed through the league website and monthly *Rinkside Update* email
- Arriving on time and fully prepared for games
- Legibly signing game sheets prior to play
- Keeping roster information accurate and up to date
- Understanding and complying with eligibility requirements

Team Captains & Managers Are Responsible For:

- Communicating league updates and information to their team
 - Attending the pre-season manager's meeting
 - Reviewing and signing off on league rules
 - Ensuring team fees are paid on time
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League Structure & Key Dates

This season, teams will no longer be permitted to request individual blackout dates. Based on our internal review and feedback from the league survey, it was clear that improving fairness and consistency in scheduling is a priority.

To achieve this, we need to move away from accommodating a large volume of individual requests, which in past seasons resulted in over 300 unique requests across the league. Instead, we have introduced more clearly defined and predictable league-wide blackout periods during high-demand times of the season. This approach will allow for more balanced scheduling and better overall planning for all teams.

Category	Details
League Size	TBD (league size determined by ice availability)
Games per Team	30 games
Games per Week	1–2 games
Weekday Game Times	8:20 PM – 11:10 PM <i>(may start as early as 7:00 PM with ice availability)</i>
Weekend Game Times	5:40 PM – 11:10 PM <i>(may start as early as 12:00 PM with ice availability)</i>
Max Days Between Games	13 days
Late Games Definition	Starts at 10:30 PM or later
Max Late Games per Team	10 games <i>(will aim for less but depends on ice availability)</i>
Registration Opens	Early July <i>(two-tiered with early registration for returning teams)</i>
Initial Schedule Release	August 31st
Realignment Request #1 Deadline	September 30th
Schedule Release #1	October 12th
Realignment Request #2 Deadline	December 17th
Schedule Release #2	December 27th

Final Realignment Request Deadline	February 15th
Final Schedule & Playoff Release	February 24th
Playoff Start Date	Beginning of April
Championship Weekend	April 30th – May 1st
Mandatory Manager’s Meeting	Week of September 7th–11 th <i>(there will be two meeting days to choose from)</i>
League-Wide Blackout Dates	Thanksgiving Weekend (Sat–Mon) Grey Cup Sunday Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day Super Bowl Sunday Valentine’s Day Baron’s Weekend (3rd weekend in March) – No games Friday/Saturday – Sunday games may begin at 7:00 PM

Division Realignment Procedure

Any team seeking realignment will be required to complete a request form to be considered. Realignment will not be based solely on wins and losses. While winning is important, competitive balance is the primary objective.

Factors considered include:

- Goals for and against
- Strength of opponents
- Player availability in wins and losses

As a large league, realignment is an ongoing process, and decisions will be made carefully to maintain fair competition.

Complaints, Questions & Feedback

All inquiries must be submitted through the league’s online forms system.

Participants can expect:

- Immediate confirmation of submission
- A follow-up response within 48 hours

- Ongoing tracking to support league improvement and accountability
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Forfeit Policy

Due to the high number of forfeits last season (over 70), the DHL will be implementing a formal forfeit policy for the upcoming season. Forfeits were a primary contributor to scheduling disruptions, and addressing this issue is essential to maintaining a fair and consistent schedule structure for all teams.

- **Forfeited games will not be rescheduled**
- Teams will be required to complete and submit a Forfeit Form
- A \$100 fine will be issued to the forfeiting team (covers compensation to the opposing team)

If fines are not paid:

- Teams will not receive games in the **proceeding schedule block**
- If a Forfeit happens in the last block and goes unpaid, the team will be **ineligible for playoffs**

Additional guidelines:

- The non-forfeiting team will receive the ice time for use (practice or scrimmage) and a \$100 gift card
 - Games cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., facility issues, weather) will be rescheduled by DHL. The DHL management will do it's best to meet the needs of both teams
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Sportsmanship & Respect

DHL maintains a **zero-tolerance policy** for:

- Fighting
- Abuse of officials
- Harassment, discrimination, or racist/homophobic language
- Intoxication that impacts participation
- Any behavior that negatively affects the league environment

Violations will result in disciplinary action in accordance with league rules.

Playoffs

- All players and goaltenders must meet eligibility requirements
- Participants are strongly encouraged to review playoff rules in advance
- 2 game series. Further Details in the Rulebook

Enjoy the Game

The Dakota Hockey League is built by players who share a passion for hockey.

Compete hard. Respect the game. Support your teammates.

Help us create the best possible adult hockey experience for everyone.