

Dakota Hockey League

2026-2027 Rules

The Hockey Canada Rulebook is [available here for reference](#).

Scheduling

- Each team will be scheduled for **30 regular season games**.
 - The schedule will be released in **three separate blocks**.
 - **Division realignment** may be requested up to three times throughout the season in conjunction with schedule releases.
 - Additional key dates and scheduling details are outlined in the **Player Handbook**.
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Payments

- A **\$1,000 deposit** is required at registration to receive the first schedule block.
 - A total of **\$4,150 must be paid** in mid October prior to the release of the second schedule block.
 - The **remaining balance of \$4,150 must be paid** in mid December and final schedule release.
 - Teams that do not meet payment deadlines **will not be scheduled in the next scheduled block**.
 - Full payment may be made at any time.
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Game Operations

Length of Games

- Games consist of 3 × 12-minute periods.
- A 6-goal differential in the 3rd period results in running time until the margin is reduced to 5 goals.
- Officials may reduce the game clock to 2 minutes remaining if the game is behind schedule.

No Timekeeper Protocol

In the event no timekeeper is available:

- Periods will be 17 minutes running time.
 - Minor penalties will be 3 minutes.
 - With 1 minute remaining in the 3rd period, the losing team may designate a player to stop the clock at whistles.
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Start of Game

- Teams must have 5 skaters and a goalie to start.
 - If a team is not ready at game time:
 - Clock starts immediately.
 - Delay of Game penalty assessed.
 - After 5 minutes: second Delay of Game penalty.
 - If still unable to meet the above player criteria by the end of the first period, the game is recorded as a 1–0 default win. Defaulted team will be subjected to the \$100 forfeit fine.
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Tie Games

- Regular season games tied at the end of regulation proceed directly to a shootout.
 - Home team chooses who shoots first.
 - Format:
 - 3 shooters per team.
 - If tied → sudden death (equal shots).
 - All eligible players must shoot once before repeats.
 - Players still serving penalties at the end of regulation cannot participate.
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Equipment & Game Setup

Pucks

- Each team must provide 3 pucks to officials before the game.

Signing In

- All players must legibly sign the game sheet prior to each game.

Proper Equipment

- CSA-approved helmets and visors are mandatory.
 - Full face protection is recommended.
 - Non-compliance:
 - 2-minute Delay of Game penalty
 - Player must correct equipment before returning to play
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Gameplay Rules

Icing

- Icing is called when the puck is shot from inside the defending blue line across the opposing goal line.
- Icing is waived if the goalie leaves the crease to play the puck.

Power Plays

- All power plays begin with a faceoff in the offending team's defensive zone.

Timeouts

- Each team is allowed one 30-second timeout per game.

Puck to Goalie's Head

- Play is immediately stopped if the puck hits the goalie's mask/head.
 - Any resulting goal from such a deflection is disallowed.
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Jerseys

- If jersey colors conflict, the **away team must change**.
 - Jerseys must:
 - Be consistent in color
 - Include unique numbers
 - Not permitted:
 - Duplicate numbers
 - Taped numbers
 - No numbers
 - Slight variations in shade are acceptable at referee discretion.
 - Teams must have at least one numbered set (two preferred).
 - Referees have final say on jersey compliance.
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Penalties, Suspensions & Conduct

Penalty Limits

- Maximum 3 penalties per player per game.
- A third penalty results in a Game Ejection.
- A double minor counts as one penalty toward the limit.

Infraction	Suspension Length	Automatic?	Notes
Fighting	League Review	No	
Match	League Review	No	
Inappropriate Language	5 Games	Yes	Includes derogatory language, slurs, etc.
Gross Misconduct	3–5 Games	No	
Major	2 Games	Yes	
Misconduct	1 Game	Yes	If assessed in the 3rd period

Refer to the Hockey Canada Rulebook for definitions of penalties.

Penalty Thresholds (Season Total – Includes Playoffs)

Individual

- **40 PIM** → 2-game suspension
- **60 PIM** → 5 game suspension + Player Action Plan

Team

- **150 PIM** → league review + team action plan
 - **250 PIM** →
 - League review & safety meeting
 - Team suspended until meeting occurs
 - Placed on probation for remainder of season and following season
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Playoff-Specific Penalties

- 15+ PIM in a game → 1-game suspension
 - 25+ PIM in a game → 3–5 game suspension
 - Suspensions carry into playoffs and/or next season if necessary.
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Suspensions

- Reviews based on:
 - Referee reports
 - Game sheet
 - LiveBarn footage

Suspended Players

- Not permitted near the bench or playing area.
 - Violations:
 - Game forfeiture
 - Additional discipline (including captain suspension or removal from league)
 - Suspended players **cannot play on any DHL team** until suspension is served.
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Team Conduct & Probation

- Teams exceeding 250 PIM:
 - Placed on probation
 - Subject to league review with team management
 - All teams must sign a **Code of Conduct** prior to the season.
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End of Game

- Handshakes are expected unless directed otherwise by officials.
 - Teams must leave the ice promptly to allow ice maintenance.
 - Dressing rooms must be vacated within **40 minutes** of game completion.
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Playoff Eligibility

Players

- Minimum of 10 regular season games played.
- Player exemptions can be requested and will be looked at on a case by case basis.
- Use of ineligible player's results in **forfeit and discipline**.

Goalies

- Must have played **at least 1 regular season game** with the team.
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Team Rosters

- Full roster (including jersey numbers) must be submitted before the first game.
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Alcohol Policy

- No alcohol permitted on benches.
 - Referees may eject players for suspected intoxication.
 - Violations may result in:
 - Meeting with league
 - Removal from league without refund
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Playoff Rules

Format

- All teams guaranteed **minimum 2 games**.
- Series format:
 - Two-game total series (every round will be a two-game series)
 - No overtime in tied games

Series Outcomes

- One win + one tie → winner of Game 1 advances
 - Split series → 3v3 OT after Game 2
 - Two ties → 3v3 OT after Game 2
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Overtime

- 5-minute sudden death (3-on-3, stop time) Overtime only occurs after game 2 of the series if the series was split, or both game 1 and game 2 finished in ties.
 - The overtime is treated as a new game:
 - No carryover penalties **however, if a Player is ejected in regulation of game 2, they cannot participate in OT or shootout**
 - Penalties during OT:
 - Result in 4-on-3 or 5-on-3 advantages
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Shootout

- Used if OT does not determine a winner:
 - 3 shooters per team
 - Higher seed chooses order
 - Sudden death if tied
- All eligible players must shoot before repeats
- Players serving penalties cannot participate
- Illegal goalie actions (e.g., throwing stick) result in automatic goal