

DAKOTA HOCKEY LEAGUE



PLAYER HANDBOOK

& RULES

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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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.

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.

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
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Captain & Manager Responsibilities

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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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 (15th) prior to the release of the second schedule block.
- The **remaining balance of \$4,150 must be paid** in mid December (12th) 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.

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 (may start as early as 7:00 PM with ice availability)
Weekend Game Times	5:40 PM – 11:10 PM (may start as early as 12:00 PM with ice availability)
Max Days Between Games	13 days
Late Games Definition	Starts at 10:30 PM or later
Max Late Games per Team	10 games (will aim for less but depends on ice availability)
Registration Opens	Early July (two-tiered with early registration for returning teams)
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	September 8 th , 9pm, September 9 th , 9pm, At Dakota, Event Hall
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 (For Baron's only) – Sunday games may begin at 7:00 PM (For Baron's only)

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.

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)
- The non-forfeiting team will receive 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

Rules

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

Team Rosters

- Full roster (including jersey numbers) must be submitted before the first game.
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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.
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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
- All players will need to check in to the league app prior to games

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

Penalties

(Assuming each penalty does not result in an injury and is not deemed to be a major penalty by the on-ice official.)

- **Minor/Double Minor Penalties at referee's discretion (2 or 4 minutes)**
 - Slashing, Body Checking (based on level of contact), Head Contact, Butt-Ending, Hooking
- **Double Minor Penalties (4 minutes)**
 - Cross Checking, High Sticking, Clipping
- **Minor Penalties (2 minutes)**
 - Tripping, Hooking, Holding, Holding the Stick, Roughing, Unsportsmanlike Conduct, Diving
- **Major Penalties or Match (5+ minutes, discretion of the official)**
 - Charging, Boarding, Kneeing, Butt Ending, Spearing, Slew Footing, Checking from Behind
- **Derogatory Terms (warning from official)**

- If the officials or timekeeper hear the comments, the offending player will be given a gross misconduct, ejected from the game, both teams will be warned, any more comments will receive a gross misconduct, ejection from the game and league review.
- If the officials and timekeeper do not hear the inappropriate comments, the teams will be warned about making such inappropriate comments (no 2 minute minor), any further offending comments heard by a game official would result in a gross misconduct and ejection.
- The referees are to submit a game report to the league, detailing the allegation of inappropriate comments. League review will follow with possible suspension or further disciplinary action

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

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.

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.

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.

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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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
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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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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

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

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

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

Complaints, Questions & Feedback

All inquiries must be submitted through the league's online forms system or using the **dhl@dakotacc.com** email.

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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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.