Boys Tournament Rules

Rules of Play, 2026

Governing Ruleset

High school divisions (grades 9–12)

All high school games are played under NCAA rules, with the Apex-specific exceptions and modifications listed below.

Youth divisions (grade 8 and below)

All youth games are played under NFHS rules, with age-appropriate youth modifications and the Apex-specific exceptions listed below.

Apex Lacrosse Events reserves the right to modify rules by division for safety, facility, weather, or schedule-related reasons. Any division-specific rule adjustments will be communicated to coaches before the start of the event.

1. Game Format

- Two (2) 20-minute **running-time halves**, or four (4) 10-minute **running-time quarters**.
- **Halftime** is 3 minutes. In the quarter format, there is a 1-minute break between quarters.
- One (1) **30-second timeout** per team per game, including overtime. A timeout must be called in the offensive end.
- A team that calls a timeout with none remaining loses possession.
- The clock stops during timeouts and for injuries at the officials' discretion.
- **Officials** keep game time and are responsible for starting and ending games on time.

2. Overtime Format

Pool play

- No overtime. The game ends in a tie.

Playoffs and championships

- First overtime: 5-minute sudden victory.
- If still tied: a 1-minute break followed by another 5-minute sudden-victory period.
- Repeat until a winner is determined.

3. Youth Division Rules

Youth divisions follow NFHS rules with USA Lacrosse age-appropriate youth modifications, unless otherwise noted by the Tournament Director.

Body contact: 12U and younger (grade 6 and below)

- No body checking is permitted.
- Defensive players may use their arms and hands to apply equal pressure against an offensive player with the ball.
- Players may not use their shoulder, torso, or head to initiate contact.
- Take-out checks, blindside hits, and any contact to the head or neck area are strictly prohibited.

Body contact: 13U and 14U (grades 7–8)

- Body checking is permitted when it meets the legal body check requirements on the next page.
- Take-out checks are strictly prohibited. A take-out check is an excessive hit where a player lowers their head or shoulder with the force or intent to put another player on the ground.

3. Youth Division Rules (continued)

Legal body check requirements: 13U and 14U

- Both players must be in an upright position.
- The checking player must have both hands on their stick.
- Contact must be made to the front or side of the opponent.
- Contact must be between the waist and shoulders.
- The opponent must have possession of the ball or be within 3 yards of a loose ball.

Any body contact deemed excessive, dangerous, avoidable, or directed at the head or neck area may result in a penalty, ejection, or further discipline at the discretion of the officials and Tournament Director.

Stick checking

- Stick checking must be controlled and directed at the stick or gloves.
- One-handed checks, uncontrolled slashes, and checks to the body, arms, head, or neck area may be penalized at the discretion of the officials.

Long poles

- Long poles are permitted based on division rules and age-appropriate standards.
- If a division has a long-pole restriction, it will be communicated before the event.

Clearing counts

- All divisions use the count in Section 12, unless officials tell coaches before the game that a youth division will play with no count.

3. Youth Division Rules (continued)

Sportsmanship (all divisions)

- Coaches, players, and spectators are expected to demonstrate positive sportsmanship at all times.
- Officials' judgment calls on the field are final and may not be protested.
- Any concerns should be brought to the Tournament Director by the head coach only.
- Unsportsmanlike behavior from coaches, players, or spectators may result in penalties, removal from the facility, or team disqualification.

4. Shot Clock (Event-Specific)

- Shot clocks are used only at events where the Tournament Director has explicitly communicated them.
- 80 seconds on each new possession.
- Resets to 60 seconds when the offense retains the ball after a shot that hits the pipe or is saved.
- Officials verbally manage and communicate the countdown.
- Failure to shoot before expiration is a turnover.

Note: If shot clocks are not in effect, officials may warn teams for stalling and call delay of game. In the last 2 minutes of regulation, Section 13 applies instead.

5. Mercy Rule (Youth Only)

- When a team leads by 7 or more goals in pool play, the trailing team receives a free clear after every goal.
- Coaches may agree to waive this rule.

6. Penalties

- All penalties are running time and start on the official's whistle.
- Duration: 30 seconds, 1 minute, or 2 minutes. No penalty is longer than 2 minutes; a foul that carries a 3-minute penalty under the governing rulebook is served as 2 minutes, non-releasable.
- 30-second and 1-minute penalties are releasable. 2-minute penalties are non-releasable.
- Penalty time stops only for injuries, timeouts, halftime, or while another penalty is being assessed.
- Time-and-a-half penalties are not enforced.

7. Face-offs

- NCAA rules apply for high school divisions.
- NFHS rules with age-appropriate youth modifications apply for youth divisions.
- A face-off violation does not require the player to sit out the next face-off.
- No knee-down or moto grip is allowed.
- Stick heads must have contrasting tape to the shaft.

8. Stick & Gear

- Stick checks are at the officials' discretion.
- NCAA/NFHS legal sticks only.
- Goalies must wear appropriate protective equipment.

9. Crease Diving

- Crease diving is not permitted in any division. A goal scored on a dive does not count.

10. Quick Restarts

- Defenders must yield 5 yards before re-engaging.
- Failure to do so is a 30-second delay-of-game penalty.

11. Substitutions

- Sub on the fly.
- EMO/EMD may sub during penalty stoppages.
- Standard 10-yard substitution box.

12. Clearing & Counts (All Divisions)

- 20 seconds to clear the defensive half.
- No requirement to touch into the offensive box.

13. Last 2 Minutes of the Game

- In all divisions, during the last 2 minutes of regulation, a team leading by 1 or 2 goals must keep the ball in the offensive box once it gets there.
- Carrying or passing the ball out of the box is a turnover, restarted where the ball left the box. A shot, or a loose ball caused by the defense, is not a violation.
- This replaces any stalling rule in the governing rulebook.

14. Player Eligibility

- No player may be rostered on more than one team.
- Players may “play up” in age but not “down.”
- Post-grad players may only participate in the oldest eligible division and must show proof of enrollment if challenged.

15. Age Requirements

- All youth players must fit the USA Lacrosse 15-month age chart.
- Players may not play in a division younger than their graduation year. For example, a 2032 cannot play in the 2033 division regardless of date of birth.

16. Tiebreakers (Pool Play)

Ties in the standings are broken in this order:

1. Head-to-head result (skipped if the teams tied or did not play each other)
2. Goal differential, capped at plus or minus 7 per game
3. Fewest goals against
4. Coin flip

Ties among three or more teams

Head-to-head is used only if every tied team has played every other tied team. It must apply evenly to all teams in the tie. If head-to-head does not separate the teams (for example, each team went 1-1), the tiebreaker moves to goal differential.

If one team has played the other tied teams but those teams have not all played each other, head-to-head is not used. The tiebreaker moves to goal differential, then goals against, then a coin flip.

Once a tie among three or more teams is reduced to two teams, the tiebreaker restarts at step 1 for those two.

16. Tiebreakers (continued)

Worked examples. In each one, Teams A, B, and C are tied.

Example	A vs B	A vs C	B vs C	Result
1. Head-to-head applies	Played	Played	Played	Head-to-head is used. All three tied teams played each other.
2. Head-to-head does not apply	Played	Played	No game	Head-to-head is not used. Team B and Team C did not play each other. The tiebreaker moves to goal differential.
3. Only two tied teams played	Played	No game	No game	Head-to-head is not used. The A vs B result does not count because Team C was not part of it. The tiebreaker moves to goal differential.

17. Discipline & Ejections (Contact Tournament Director)

- **First ejection** (other than fighting): the player sits out the next game.
- **Second ejection:** the player is disqualified for the remainder of the event.
- **Fighting:** immediate removal from the event and review by the Tournament Director.

18. Weather Policy

- Weather is monitored via WeatherBug and lightning apps.
- The Tournament Director may delay or cancel games due to weather.

Lightning protocol

- 3 horn blasts signal an immediate lightning delay.
- Clear fields immediately.
- Seek shelter off-site.
- A new 30-minute delay starts with each detected strike.

19. Field Rules (Contact Tournament Director)

- No alcohol, drugs, smoking, pets, or artificial noisemakers (horns, whistles, sirens, cowbells, etc.).
- Violators may be removed from the premises.
- Apex events are smoke- and pet-free.

20. Tournament Director Authority

The Tournament Director reserves the right to shorten, modify, or cancel games due to weather, facility restrictions, safety concerns, or schedule delays.

The Tournament Director decides questions of eligibility, discipline, scheduling, and how a rule is applied. These decisions are final. Officials' judgment calls on the field are not reviewed.

21. Contact

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