



Rule Changes 2026-2028





Rule Changes 2026-28

Rule 2.1 (b) – Composition of Team

Rule Clarification

A team will have no more than five team officials on the Players' Bench at any time, including at least one Hockey Canada Safety Person (HTCP in Ontario).

Should a team not have a 'qualified' Hockey Canada Safety Program / HTCP individual of their team staff present at any time during the game, they may leverage the qualified individual of the opposing team to carry out duties for them, if necessary, and if agreed to by the opposing team. When utilizing the qualified individual of the opposing team the game sheet notes must clearly reflect this circumstance.

INTERPRETATIONS

Interpretation 1 Rule 2.1 (b)

In verifying the Official Game Report, officials are not to make any decision regarding the certification of team officials, or any lack thereof. Any irregularities will be reported by the Referee to the appropriate Member or league delegate for further action.





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Rule 2.2 (e) – Players in Uniform

Wording Change

Each player will wear an individual number of at least 25.40 cm (10 in.) in height on the back of their ~~sweater~~ **jersey**.

*Note 1: Each team will declare its colours to the appropriate Member or league at the beginning of each season. If these colours are accepted, they may not be changed during the season without the approval of the appropriate Member or league. In regional competition, it will be the responsibility of the Home Team to change its ~~sweater~~ **jersey** and socks if the colours of the competing teams conflict. The decision in this matter will be left to the Referee in charge of the game.*





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Rule 4.2 (b) – Minor Penalties

Rule Change

If the opposing team scores a goal while a team is shorthanded because of (1) or more Minor or Bench Minor penalties **or when a team would otherwise become shorthanded due to a delayed Minor or Bench Minor penalty**, the Minor penalty with the least amount of time remaining will automatically terminate. In the case of a player who has received a double Minor penalty, their first Minor penalty will be terminated.

Note 1: For the purposes of terminating penalties under this rule, a delayed Minor or Bench Minor penalty is treated as a penalty with two minutes remaining.

If a team scores a goal while playing shorthanded and a delayed time penalty is signaled against the opposing team, the delayed penalty is still assessed because the team that is scored upon is not shorthanded.





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Rule 4.2 (b) – Minor Penalties (continued...)

When a goal is scored on a Penalty Shot against a team that is shorthanded ~~because of a Minor or Bench Minor penalty,~~ **as outlined above**, no player of the shorthanded team will return to the ice ~~with~~ **upon** the scoring of the goal.

Interpretation 1 - Rule 4.2 ~~(a)~~ **(b)**

When a goal is scored **(excluding on a Penalty Shot)** and time penalties are being served **or signaled on delay**, the Referee **must** ~~would~~ ask the following questions:

1. Is the team scored on playing shorthanded **or to become shorthanded due to a delayed time penalty?**
2. Is it because of a Minor or Bench Minor penalty?





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Rule 4.2 (b) – Minor Penalties (continued...)

ACTION:

If the Referee answers YES to both questions, then the Minor or Bench Minor penalty with the least amount of time remaining would be terminated. The only exception would be if the goal was scored during a Penalty Shot, in which case no ~~player would return~~ **penalty would terminate.**

Note 1: In situations where time penalties are already being served, while an additional time penalty or penalties are on delay, officials must factor that time penalty into their evaluation as to whether the team being scored on is shorthanded. When a delayed penalty is signaled on the stoppage of play where a goal is scored by the non-offending team, officials should envision the delayed penalty time being placed on the time clock. This will assist officials in identifying the minor penalty with the least amount of time remaining for termination.



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Interpretation 3 - Rule 4.2 (b)

A8 – 2	5:00
Delayed penalty B6 – 2	4:00
A scores	4:00

No player returns and the delayed minor penalty to B6 is assessed, as Team B is not shorthanded. Team's Play 4 on 4 when play resumes.

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Interpretation 4 - Rule 4.2 (b)

A8 – 2	5:00
B3 – 2	4:30
Delayed penalty B6 – 2	4:00
A scores	4:00

The minor penalty being served by B3 terminates. Upon the scoring of the goal team B would become shorthanded by way of the delayed minor penalty and thus Team B3's minor penalty has the least amount of time remaining.

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Interpretation 5 - Rule 4.2 (b)

A8 – 2	5:00
B3 – 2	4:30
Delayed penalty A6 – 5	4:00
B scores	4:00

Team A would become shorthanded by way of both A8's minor and A6's delayed major penalty upon the stoppage of play. Therefore, as the only minor penalty contributing to Team A being shorthanded, A8's minor terminates upon the scoring of Team B's goal.



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Rule 4.14 – ~~Delayed~~ Deferred Penalties

Added Term to Glossary- No change in rule

DEFERRED PENALTY: A deferred penalty is a time penalty that cannot be served immediately upon the resumption of play because the offending team is already shorthanded in a manner that they have been reduced to playing with the minimum of three (3) skaters, due to previously assessed and still active time penalties.



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Rule 4.14 – ~~Delayed~~ Deferred Penalties

New Rule Name

Only two **(2)** players from the same team can serve time penalties at the same time. A team cannot play with fewer than three **(3)** players (plus a goaltender) on the ice. A third penalty to the same team would be considered ~~“delayed”~~ **a ‘deferred’ penalty.**

A deferred penalty must still be served and may only commence upon the expiration or termination (opposing team goal) of a preceding time penalty that has resulted in the offending team playing with the minimum three (3) skaters.





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Rule 5.2 (k) – Referee(s) and Linespersons

Rule Change

If for whatever reason, the appointed Referee(s) or Linesperson(s) are prevented from appearing, the Managers or Coaches of the two competing teams will agree on temporary Referee(s) and Linesperson(s). **The temporary officials may include any Hockey Canada certified officials including players, team officials or spectators that may be present at the game or arena. Should no certified officials be present then the teams may appoint one (1) team official or player from each team who will act as temporary officials.**

Note: Temporary officials must wear the minimum equipment of skates, helmet, and facial protector (visor).





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Rule 6.1 (d)(f) – Change of Players (Interpretation 2)

Rule Clarification

Each team is only entitled to one complete change of players per stoppage. There are two exceptions where a team will be permitted to make an additional change:

- i. Following the change of players but prior to the resumption of play, a team is assessed a penalty that causes them to become shorthanded. In this case, both teams will be permitted to make an additional change of players on that stoppage.**
- ii. If a line change is made and then a timeout is called, further changes can be made, except where Rule 6.1 (f) ‘No change on icing’ is in effect.**

When a team attempts to make a player change after their allotted time during a stoppage of play the Referee will send the player back to their bench, thereby giving a warning that any subsequent violation will result in a Bench Minor penalty





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Rule 6.1 (g) – Change of Players

New Rule

In categories of U18 AAA, Junior and at the option of the Member in Senior, when the goal frame has been accidentally dislodged by any defending player, including the goaltender, causing a stoppage of play, this will result in a ‘no-change’ situation. The defending team will be subject to the same restrictions as outlined in Rule 6.7 (d)(i).



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Rule 6.2 (a) – Face-off Conduct (interpretation 1)

Rule Clarification

~~In the case of player movement in preparing~~ **When positioning players** for end zone face-offs **(other than the players taking the face-off)**, the attacking team must be first to take their positions; the defending team has the right to set up its defence.

~~For face-offs in the neutral zone,~~ **For all face-offs, the Visiting Team face-off player must place their stick down first for the face-off regardless of whether they are the attacking or defending team.** For a violation of this rule, a warning will be issued to that team. A subsequent violation during the same stoppage of play may result in a Minor penalty for Rule 10.1 (a) – Delay of Game. If the Home Team player wishes to put their stick down first, they are allowed to do so, if it does not cause a problem. If there is a problem, then apply the rule strictly.



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Rule 6.6 (h) – Goals and Assists

New Rule

In Junior divisions, in the event that the goal post is displaced, either deliberately or accidentally, by a defending player (including the goalkeeper), prior to the puck crossing the goal line between the normal position of the goalposts, the referee may award a goal.

- i. In order to award a goal in this situation, the goal post must have been displaced by the actions of the defending player (including the goalkeeper), the attacking player must have an imminent scoring opportunity prior to the goal post being displaced, and it must be determined that the puck would have entered the net between the normal position of the goal posts.**

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Rule 6.6 (h) – Goals and Assists (continued...)

- ii. If the goal post is deliberately displaced by the goalkeeper during the course of “breakaway”, a goal will be awarded to the non-offending team.
- iii. When the goal post has been displaced deliberately by the defending team when the goalkeeper has been removed for an extra attacker thereby preventing an impending goal by the attacking team, the referee shall award a goal to the attacking team.
- iv. The goal frame is considered to be displaced if either or both goal pegs are no longer in their respective holes in the ice, or the net has come completely off one or both pegs, prior to or as the puck enters the goal.



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Rule 6.7- Icing the Puck

Procedure Change for Linespersons

Icing the puck is the action of a player shooting, batting, kicking, or deflecting the puck from their own half of the ice, as divided by the centre red line, down and across the goal line in the opposing team's defending zone. If the puck enters the net on such a play, then it is not icing.

Should icing be called, the Linesperson that stops play should blow the whistle and then raise their non-whistle arm to signal icing.





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Rule 6.9 – High-Sticking the Puck

Rule Clarification & Change

Players **and goaltenders** may not contact the puck with their stick, above the normal height of the shoulders during the regular course of play.

(b) No goal may be scored as the result of High-Sticking the puck, unless a player of the offending team bats the puck into their own goal, in which case, the goal will be allowed.

The determining factor for a goal scored by a high stick is the height of the stick relative to the height of the crossbar. If the puck contacts a portion of the stick that is below the level of the crossbar (despite some other portion of the stick being above the crossbar) and directly enters the goal, the goal will be allowed.





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Rule 6.18 (a) - Goaltender Safety

New Rule

In categories of U13 and below should a Goaltender be struck in the head by the puck the Referee shall stop play as soon as it is safe to do so, unless the puck deflects directly into the goal, in which case the goal shall be allowed. If no goal has been scored by an immediate deflection off the goaltender, play will be stopped, and the resulting face-off shall take place at the nearest end-zone face- off location to where the shot was taken.

Officials should always allow team staff to evaluate the goaltender during a stoppage under this rule (if necessary) to allow for concussion protocols be applied.



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RULE 6.18 INTERPRETATIONS

Interpretation 1 Rule 6.18 (a)

To determine if a goal is allowed when the puck 'deflects' into the goal after striking the goaltender's head, it is best for the Referee to abstain from blowing the whistle immediately. The puck may deflect off the goaltender's head directly into the goal or subsequently the goal frame and then directly into the goal, granted the puck has not been contacted by any other player of either team, prior to entering the goal. As soon as a player from either team contacts the puck after it has struck the goaltender's head, the whistle may be blown and any goal scored after such contact shall be disallowed.

Interpretation 2 Rule 6.18 (a)

For the purpose of this rule the reference to the goaltender's head refers to the protective mask / helmet and does NOT include any throat protectors that may be affixed to or hanging from the mask or helmet.





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Rule 7.10 - Fighting

Added Term to Glossary- No change in rule

SECONDARY FIGHT: A second, separate fight that occurs during the same stoppage of play, regardless of whether it involves the same player(s) or different player(s). There may be multiple 'secondary' fights at the same stoppage of play.

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Rule 10.1 – Delay of Game

Rule Clarification

Delay of Game occurs when any player or team deliberately causes a stoppage of play or delays the restart of play. This includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:

- vii. A team which, after a warning by the Referee, fails to place the correct number of players on the ice and commence play. **This includes 'no change' situations (Rule 6.1 (f) – Change of Players) where the offending team attempts to make a change, does not place the correct players on the ice as identified by the officials, or any player(s) of that team unnecessarily delays the resumption of play.**

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Rule 10.1 (a) – Delay of Game (Interpretation 11)

Rule Clarification

On a stoppage of play, the Referee notices that the goaltender is at the Players' Bench. The Referee must then notify the team that they must **do one of the following:** replace the goaltender with the alternate goaltender, **keep the original goaltender in the net and be assessed a Minor penalty, play with six players, or take their time-out, if allowed.**

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Rule 10.4 (d) – Leaving the Players’ or Penalty Bench (Interpretation 6)

Rule Change

Where the first player to leave a bench ~~and participate in~~ **during** a fight comes from the Penalty Bench, they will be assessed three minor penalties, plus a Game Misconduct penalty, plus any other penalties they may be assessed under the rules. They receive a double Minor penalty and Game Misconduct penalty for being the first player to leave the Penalty Bench, plus another Minor penalty for leaving the Penalty Bench before their penalty expires.



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Rule 10.7 (a) – Too Many Players

Rule Clarification

A Bench Minor penalty will be assessed to any team who is guilty of Too Many Players on the ice.

Where a team commits “Deliberate Illegal Substitution”, ~~purposefully placing too many players on the ice to gain a stoppage of play~~, in the last two minutes of regular playing time or any time in overtime, a Penalty Shot will be awarded to the non-offending team.

Deliberate illegal substitution occurs when a team intentionally sends extra players onto the ice while play is in progress for the purpose of gaining an advantage, causing a stoppage of play or preventing a goal. Premature (early) substitution during a line change is not a deliberate illegal substitution situation.





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Rule 10.8 – Refusing to Start Play

Rule Clarification

Teams – team officials and players – are not permitted to suspend or conclude a game for any reason. The Head Coach is responsible for all actions of their team, including in a situation of refusal to start play.

A team is determined to be ‘refusing to start play’ when:

- **A Team refuses to place the correct number of players on the ice, after being warned by the Referee;**
- **A player or team official refuses to leave the Players’ bench, penalty bench or general playing area after being assessed a Game Ejection, Game Misconduct, Gross Misconduct, Match penalty or Misconduct; or**
- **It is apparent that a team has either withdrawn from the ice (e.g. leaves the players’ bench) or has refused to appear for the start of a game or period.**

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Rule 10.8 – Refusing to Start Play (continued...)

Procedure Change

- i. When an incident of ‘refusing to start play’ has occurred, the Referee will assess a Bench Minor penalty for Delay of Game. If this occurs in the last two (2) minutes of regulation time or any time in overtime, a Penalty Shot shall be awarded in lieu of the Bench Minor penalty.
- ii. After the Bench Minor penalty is assessed, the offending team must resume play without any unnecessary delay.
- iii. If the offending team does not resume play promptly after the Bench Minor penalty is assessed, the Head Coach will be assessed a Game Misconduct penalty, and the game will be ‘forfeited’.

Where the Head Coach has been assessed a Game Misconduct penalty under this rule and the game has been forfeited, the Referee will report the individual(s) by completing a Game Incident Report, including full details and submitting the report to the appropriate Member or league delegate.

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Rule 10.8 – Refusing to Start Play (continued...)

Procedure Change

10.8 (a) A Bench Minor penalty for ‘Delay of Game’ will be assessed to any team who refuses to start play.

If this occurs in the last two (2) minutes of regulation time or anytime in overtime, a Penalty shot will be assessed in lieu of the Bench Minor penalty.

10.8 (b) No Major penalty may be assessed under this rule.

10.8 (c) No Match penalty may be assessed under this rule.

10.8 (d) No Misconduct penalty may be assessed under this rule.

10.8 (e) A Game Misconduct penalty will be assessed to the Head Coach of any team who refuses to start play, after being assessed a Bench Minor penalty for Delay of Game.



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Signals Change

SLEW-FOOTING

Striking the leg with either hand below the knee **in a backward to forward motion**, keeping both skates on the ice.

TRIPPING / CLIPPING

Striking the leg with either hand below the knee in a **forward to backward motion**, keeping both skates on the ice.