



Dodgeball Rules & Handbook©

January 15, 2026 – Draft 4

Introduction

Rainbow Sports League was founded with the philosophy that all people are welcome to participate in a safe, social, and inclusive environment. The purpose of RSL is to engage members of the LGBTQ+ community, friends, and allies in healthy, active sports and activities by creating and managing structured games, leagues and tournaments in a safe, consistent, and organized fashion.

Rainbow Sports League follows these principals in order and in precedence. At no time shall any higher ranked principal be compromised for the sake of another by any official, team, or player.

- 1) **Safety:** All measures will be taken so that any and all activities rank safety as the league's number one priority.
- 2) **Participation / Inclusion:** All people are welcome in RSL games and activities, and participation is fundamental to all involved.
- 3) **Respect:** All people affiliated with RSL, its teams or its events shall treat each other with dignity and respect at all times, both on and off the field.
- 4) **Fun:** The purpose of RSL in its core, is to foster a fun, philanthropic, social environment.
- 5) **Honesty / Fair Play:** It is expected that all players, teams and officials shall adhere to a strict honor code at all times.
- 6) **Competition:** While RSL games and activities keep score and award champions, at no time shall any player, team, or official allow the competitive nature inherent in sports take precedence over any of the above founding principles.

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Section I – Conduct & Policies

1. **League Principles**

1.1 **Sportsmanship**

Officials, players and their guests shall conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner at all times, including both on and off the field. RSL expects the highest level of respect from anyone affiliated or attending our events and conduct unbecoming will not be tolerated at any time.

1.2 **Agreement:** By participating in an RSL event or activity, each competitor agrees

- a) To be governed by the rules as presented by RSL, both as written and in the spirit and intent of said rules.
- b) To accept any decisions or penalties imposed by said rules.
- c) To respect all aspects of the league's priorities.
- d) To treat all materials, equipment, and venues with great care including the environment in which we are playing. This includes, but is not limited to, garbage, foul language, smoking, illegal substance, weapons, and alcohol policies and damage to property.

1.3 **Drug & Weapons Policy:** Rainbow Sports League is a drug and weapon-free zone, and any use or distribution of any illegal substances or the possession of any weapons of any kind while attending or engaging in any RSL sponsored events is strictly prohibited.

- a) **Alcohol:** While may or may not be regulated by venue restrictions, any public intoxication will not be tolerated and is subject to disciplinary actions, including ejection from venue for the remainder of the day.

1.4 **Weather:** Outdoor activities may be cancelled or delayed under these guidelines.

- a) Lightning within a 30-mile radius, postpones activities for 30 minutes.
- b) Heavy rain of any kind postpones games for one hour following the conclusion of rain.
- c) If similar conditions return within the postponement periods, activities will then be cancelled for the day and re-scheduled according to the rain date calendar.
- d) Games will be cancelled following a 1-hour continual period of heavy rain.
- e) Activities may proceed if the rain is considered light and variable, and the field conditions are safe.
- f) Should any venue or facility be closed or restricted in use, RSL will advise through e-mail and social media communications as soon as possible.

1.5 **Field / Venue Rules:** All rules and policies put in place by the venue must be respected and will be strictly enforced. (Such as, no pets, no smoking, no loud music, no alcohol, etc.)

1.6 **Discrimination:** RSL has a strict no-discrimination policy. If anyone feels they have been discriminated against for any reason they are to report it to league management immediately. Any person affiliated with an RSL event making racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation slurs or actions are subject to disciplinary proceedings up to and including dismissal from the league.

1.7 Bullying & Taunting: Teasing, shouting, arguing, cheering against, complaining, name-calling, excessive swearing, verbally or physically abusing or intimidating players or game officials in any way (even if intended as a joke, but not received in that manner) will not be tolerating under any circumstances, regardless if it occurs in person, off venue, or on-line.

- a) Umpires shall be responsible for monitoring on field and sideline behavior and can issue warnings and make recommendations to the Game Referee for any disciplinary actions.
- b) Game Referee may issue individual warnings / cards and if deemed that it is caused by multiple players on a team, he may provide a “team warnings”, followed by a forfeit on the current or future games upon the second occurrence.
- c) Off the field behavior, including at social events, public spaces, or even on social media that project any players, teams or league officials in an aggressive or highly negative light will be considered the same as behavior on the field, and is subject to the same disciplinary policies and procedures.

1.8 Disciplinary Policies: Apply to any infraction listed or unlisted that is deemed unsportsmanlike or is contrary to the RSL core philosophy and principals.

- a) Game Referee, staff, or league officials may issue warnings.
- b) Only Game Referees and league officials can issue Yellow or Red Cards at any time.
- c) Players receiving a Yellow Card must sit out the remainder of the inning (Kickball) or game in match play sports (Dodgeball, Volleyball, Darts, Cornhole etc.). A five-minute sideline penalty issued for timed “period” sports (Soccer, Hockey, Basketball, etc.)
- d) Red Cards may be issued for more serious violations, and are not required to follow a Yellow Card.
- e) Red Card “Levels” will be dependent on the severity of the violation as determined by the Game Referee in consultation with league officials.
 - Level 1 Violation: Removed from field of play for the day
 - Level 2 Violation: Removed from field of play for the day and suspended for the next two game days.
 - Level 3 Violation: Removed from field of play, suspended for the remainder of the season, including playoffs, and suspended from all RSL activities for 6 months.
 - Level 4 Violation: Removed from field of play and banned from all RSL activities indefinitely, including the remainder of the season and playoffs.
- f) After a Red Card has been issued, any additional infraction within its 6-month window will constitute a charge of gross misconduct and will be subject to long-term suspension or permanent ejection from the league as determined by the GM and League Officials.
- g) Players receiving suspensions or ejections may apply, in writing, for re-instatement following a 6-month waiting period.

1.9 Injury Policies: Safety is and will always be the number one priority for Rainbow Sports League and the following polices are in place for everyone's well-being.

- a) Injured players may be replaced or can exit a game at any time without penalties.
- b) Any injury that incapacitates a player, even if momentarily, will stop active play immediately at the Game Referee's discretion.
- c) Any injury to the head that causes any dizziness or unconsciousness must be reported immediately to the attending league officials who shall stop game play to assess the situation. Emergency medical officials will be called for any head related injuries.
- d) Any injured player that is actively bleeding must exit the field of play and cannot return until the bleeding has stopped or has been treated and covered.
- e) The RSL will have, on hand, at least one First Aid kit at every venue for use by its players and officials as needed.
- f) Injured players that required immediate medical attention must provide a doctor's note verifying that they are recovered and physically capable prior to returning to active play.

Section II – Dodgeball Basics

Part 2: Court & Equipment

2.1 **Court** - RSL is responsible for establishing a safe playing court under the following guidelines.

- a) **Turf:** Artificial grass or basketball flooring are both acceptable for this league.
- b) **Court size:** 41' x 33' rectangle, total court size*, with a center demarcation line. RSL reserves the right to adjust the court size dependent on available facilities.
- c) **Markers:** Where possible, lines and/or markers will be placed surrounding the court in order to determine in / out of bounds. There will also be a center line determining sides.
- d) **Safety Lines:** Mark the Safety Zone which is 3' on either side of the center demarcation.
- e) **Game Referee:** May stop play to correct any improper court set-up and at their discretion may reverse a call or institute a replay.
- f) **Protests:** Any protests regarding improper court set up will not be accepted.

2.2 Equipment

- a) **Nets:** When two connected courts are utilized, a temporary wall or netting will be utilized to divide the courts. This temporary netting is considered out of bounds.
- b) **Ball:** Only the official RSL provided dodgeballs shall be used in all games. The same balls shall be used the entire game, unless agreed upon by both captains to change them.
- c) **Uniforms:** Team uniforms, either RSL shirts or custom, are required to have player numbers.
- d) **Shoes & Gloves:** Athletic footwear is required at all time, however no cleats or spikes permitted of any kind. Gloves of any kind, with or without fingers, are not permitted. Athletic wrapping for protection or injury is permitted.

Part 3: Players

3.1 **A. Number of Players on Roster: Minimum of 8 and maximum of 12.** Registered players on a roster. **NOTE this may be adjusted by RSL if needed.*

B. Number of Players on the Court: Minimum of 6 and a maximum of 8 may be in active play on the court per game. Number of players per game will be “matched” to reflect and even number on both sides, with any additional players lining up along sidelines to rotate in during defensive outs or choose to sit out the entire game. On court players may also be substituted from a roster between games. Late players may join at the start of a new game.

3.2 **Player Eligibility:** All players must meet the following criteria:

- a) Must be 21 years or older.
- b) Must have signed liability and conduct forms.
- c) Must have paid registration (or substitution) fees.
- d) All players must have a valid photo ID with them on game days, and are subject to verification at any time. Any player without an ID, shall be removed from the game.

3.3 **Team Captain:** Each team shall have one official “Captain” representing their team. This “Captain” may be substituted should the registered captain be absent. Captain may not necessarily play, but must be registered with the team.

- 3.4 **All Players Participate:** Each player attending a match shall play. (no sit-outs) However, rotating in and out between games is permitted.
- 3.5 **No Show:** Players who no-show, with no warning or contact, twice during a regular season are subject to removal and replacement by the team captain. Players removed from a roster for this reason are not eligible for refunds.
- 3.6 **Absenteeism:** Players who miss three or more regular season game days, regardless of the reason, are subject to removal and replacement by the team captain. Players removed from a roster for this reason are not eligible for refunds.
- 3.7 **Injury:** Players no longer able to play due to injury may apply for a pro-rated refund.
- 3.8 **Substitutions:** May play on any team under these restrictions:
- Regular season matches only (not tournaments).
 - They must not be a registered member of any team in the league.
 - They must sign a waiver and pay a \$10 “per match” fee prior to playing.
 - The team has less than 16 players in attendance
 - Each team may only have a maximum of two subs during any regular season match.

Part 4: Teams

(League may be split into multiple divisions, Competitive & Recreational – all rules apply to both divisions)

- 4.1 **Team Names:** While may be suggestive or double entendre may not be deemed offensive or disrespectful in any way. Team colors will be assigned by league, and all efforts will be made to accommodate requests, but cannot be guaranteed.
- 4.2 **Team Events:** May organize chat rooms, social media accounts, practices, or events, however, the Rainbow Sports League code of conduct extends to those locations as well and must be followed in the same manner.
- 4.3 **Custom Jerseys:** It is expected that all custom jerseys include the RSL League Logo visible on the front of the jersey. ***As of April 1, 2026 – all custom team shirts & jerseys will be required to include the RSL logo, on front or sleeve, no smaller than 4”x 4”.***

Section III Dodgeball Game Play

Part 5: Fundamental Rules

- 5.1 Matches:** Consist of multiple games, as many as time will allow. (There may be multiple divisions, Competitive & Recreational)
- 5.2 Time Limits:** There is no individual game time limit; however, Matches will be a total of 20 minutes consisting of two 10-minute halves, with a 2- minute break between halves. Games in progress at the 10-minute mark will continue until completion.
- 5.3 Scoring:** Each game within a match is awarded a winning “point”. The team with the highest number of game wins / points at the end of the match wins the match.
- 5.4 Match Winning:** At the end of time, should the final game result create a tie, the match will be declared a tie and each team awarded a “tie” for the match.
- 5.5 Tie Games:** There shall be no tie games. Each game must play until a winner is declared.
- 5.6 Warm-Ups:** Each team is entitled to a 5-minute warm up prior to the first game.
- 5.7 Season Standings:** Determined by number of matches won (W/L record). In case of a tie, it is broken by head-to-head records. In case of a further tie, it is broken by total games won throughout the season. There shall be no ties in final season standings.
- 5.8 Home & Visitor Assignments:** IE: Choice of Side will be determined by a coin toss, Rock-Paper-Scissors shoot out, or other random method provided by the Referee. The “Wall Side” will have the 3 ball advantage at all times. Teams swap sides between every game, and the second half starts opposite from the final game of the first half..
- 5.9 Referees:** Games will be officiated by one authorized individual, the Match Referee. All members of the league accept that the final say on all calls goes to the Referee. Should a second, back-up, umpire be included, the primary Match Referee may consult with their back up, but all final calls are made by him/her.
- a) This Match Referee may be a professional or volunteer or member of a team not participating in the match.
 - b) Should volunteers be utilized, each team is responsible for having available at least one trained and capable umpire for assignments throughout the season.
 - c) Volunteers may not referee matches in which their team is participating.
 - d) Match Referee has jurisdiction of all calls, including game cancelation, player ejections and final rulings are not subject to protest.
 - e) All Match Referees and Game Umpires are under the jurisdiction of the RSL Head Referee that has final authority over any rule discrepancies or decisions.
- 5.10 Rosters:** Prior to each match, each team shall submit to the Referee, an attendance roster indicating who from their team will be playing during the match.

5.11 Forfeits: A team not ready at game time forfeits game one. A team not ready at the 5-minute mark, forfeits game 2, and this continues at 5-minute intervals. A team not ready at the 10-minute mark forfeits the match. Teams must have a minimum of 8 players to count.

5.12 Game Starts: Games start under these conditions.

- a) All players must have at least one foot behind the back baselines.
- b) Five balls are placed on the centerline, with three evenly placed on the Wall Side for the controlling team, and two placed on the other side for the Net Side team. The balls for the start are always on the teams' right-hand side.
- c) The game starts at the blow of the Referee's whistle.
- d) Runners from each team may advance past the safety line to retrieve the placed balls.
- e) Only the designated runners (3 & 2) may cross the safety line to initially retrieve the balls. Additional players crossing the safety line will be considered out.
- f) Only balls designated for each team may be retrieved. (A runner cannot touch or steal a competing team's initial balls – if so, that player is out.)
- g) **Balls must be retrieved and passed/brought back past the safety line, before they can be used in an attack.**
- h) Any ball thrown prior to being brought behind the safety line is considered a foul ball and players hit on the opposing team are considered safe.
- i) Foul balls (those thrown inside the safety line) may still be caught by the opposing team, forcing the attacking player out of the game.
- j) A runner may roll or toss an initial ball back to a teammate, and is not required to be the initial attacker

5.13 Game Ends: When the last player is out on one of the competing teams, the game is over the team with remaining members is awarded the win.

5.14 Subsequent Games: The next game is to be set up and started within one-minute of the conclusion of the previous game end. Exceptions: Injuries or rule clarifications subject to the Referee's discretion. No new games shall be started once the 10 minute warning has sounded.

5.15 Game Schedules: Game schedules, match-ups, times and dates are set by RSL management and are not subject to custom requests or adjustments.

Part 6: Offensive Play – Throwing the ball

6.1 Throws: Balls may be thrown overhand, underhand or side arm, in any fashion.

6.2 Kicks: Balls kicked or set in motion by any other body part is a dead ball and not considered a valid attack.

6.3 Scrunching: Balls may not be compressed or “scrunched” prior to throwing in order to increase the density of the ball for speed or accuracy. Scrunched balls are considered dead. A player who repeatedly scrunches balls may be called out by the Match Referee.

6.4 Shagging: Active players may enter the out of bounds area to shag balls but cannot remain there or attack from out of bounds. Any player, whether “in” or “out” during a game, may shag out of bounds balls.

6.5 Out Players Shagging: Players that are “out” may not touch balls that are still in-bounds. If so, that ball must be relinquished to the opposing team.

6.6 Out of Bounds: A player must have at least one foot “in-bounds” at all times (except while shagging) or may be called out.

6.7 Head Hits: A player may not intentionally throw and/or aim specifically to hit an opposing player in the neck or head. Any hit to the neck or head, while the player is in a normal position, is not considered an out. (However, a player who drops, ducks, or falls putting their head/neck into the path of a ball that would not have normally hit their head/neck, will be considered out upon the hit.)

6.8 Control: A team with ball control (3 or more) must relinquish control by throwing (or rolling) enough balls to give up control, within 15 seconds. At that point, control must be given over. A controlling ball thrown AFTER the 15 seconds is considered a foul ball and cannot cause an out but can be caught for a defensive out. Just-over-the-line placements, for the purpose of relinquishing control, may not be retrieved back by the originating team.

6.9 Crossing the Line: Unless it was placed there by the attacking team (see above), players may reach over the line to pick up a ball on the opposing side, however, if any part of that person touches the ground / floor while attempting to reach over the line, results in an out.

Part 7: Defensive Play

7.1 Catching: A ball caught in the air, prior to touching the floor or going out of bounds (hitting a wall or net) is a defensive attack. The throwing player is out, and the catching team gains the next in line back into active play.

7.2 Deflects & Bobbled Catches: A live ball that was first subject to a block, deflect, or bobbled catch, that is subsequently caught by any player on the receiving team, prior to hitting the floor or going out of bounds, counts as a caught ball, and any / all players hit during that play is safe. A blocked or deflected ball is only live on the receiving team. If a ball is blocked/deflected back over the line, it is considered dead at that point, and cannot be caught for an out, or cause an offensive out.

7.3 Three-point stance: Any player that is positioned with three or more points of body contact with the floor or wall, is considered out. EXCEPTION: A player that falls, rolls, or temporarily touches three points to the floor while in motion, during an active play, and does not remain there for more than 2 seconds, is not considered out. Squatting is permitted, as long as only two points of contact are made.

7.4 Blocking: Players may block balls using a held ball and is not considered out as long as the blocked ball does not come in contact with that player upon deflection. IE: Blocking a ball that deflects into that, or any other player's body, after being blocked is still considered an out. While blocking, the hands holding the ball is considered part of the ball and is not subject to an out. (The wrists and arms, however, are not.) Should the "blocking" ball be dropped during the play, that player is out.

7.5 Outs: The following are considered outs, in which the player is to raise their hands and leave the court immediately.

- a) The ball hitting them or clothing anywhere but the head (or hands during blocking).
- b) The ball they threw gets caught by the other team.
- c) Taking a three-point stance (for more than 2 seconds).
- d) Stepping fully out of bounds in a defensive maneuver.
- e) Stepping or placing any body part on the floor of the opposing team's side.
- f) Shouting, claiming, or pointing out a player on the opposing team that they believe is out. (The Shouting player is THEN CALLED OUT)
- g) Dropping a ball that was being used as a blocker.
- h) Balls that hit multiple players while still active, causes all players hit on that play to be out.

7.6 Honor System: Players are to be held accountable for their own voluntary outs. The referee is there to monitor the honor system and not to call every out in the game. Instead, they are watching to specifically call players out that do not do so voluntarily. Players are not to assume they are safe unless called out. Players not readily volunteering their own outs will get one warning per match, after that they are subject to yellow cards and ejection of the match.

7.7 Calling Outs: Attacking players that challenge an opposing team member's action (not going out voluntarily) will be immediately called out by the referee. This constitutes a warning for first offense, and match ejection upon second offense.

7.8 Out Line Up: Once out, players must line up along the side line, in the order in which they went out, ready to shag out of bound balls, and to re-enter the game for a defensive caught ball.

Part 8: Time Outs & Challenges

8.1 Team Captains: Only team captains may challenge calls. Team players arguing, questioning, or challenging any call are then called out by the referee (7.6) and are subject to disciplinary policies.

8.2 One Per Match: Captains get one official challenge per match. A captain attempting to challenge additional calls during a game will forfeit the game currently being played.

8.3 Time Stop: Time shall be stopped for a maximum of one-minute per challenged call.

8.4 Rules Questions & Clarifications: Captains may request a rules clarification only between games, but it will not change a call made during a previously finished game.

8.5 Intentional Delay of Game: Not permitted under any circumstances and may be subject to game penalties or disciplinary actions upon the Match Referee's discretion.

8.6 Time Outs: Each team is permitted one "Time Out" per match lasting no longer than one minute. However, should an injury occur; the Match Referee may pause play in order to assess the situation or allow assistance to a player.

8.7 Water Break: There may be an official water break called by the referee at the approximate half-way mark of the match, at the umpire's discretion.

8.8 Challenging Calls / Pointing out Infractions: Should a player question an opposing player's actions (not going out voluntarily) shouting at them, or the referee, during active play will result in the challenging player being called out and play will continue. However, there are two acceptable ways to address this situation as follows:

8.8a A captain can stop play to make a challenge. Once per match. They can discuss it with their team, then report the challenge to the referee for a ruling.

8.8b Between games, a team player should report their concerns to the captain. The captain then reports the issue / discusses the issue with referee, who, in turn, may issue a warning to the offending player, and/or has a heightened awareness of the offending player for future infractions. This is not considered a challenge and no rulings will be changed from a previous game.

Section IV Dodgeball Playoff / Tournament Regulations

Part 9: Tournament Details: *(Tournaments may be split into two or more divisions, Competitive & Recreational – at the sole discretion of RSL and may or may not break divisions evenly. All rules apply to both divisions)*

9.1 Timing: Following each regular season, and on special occasions, The Rainbow Sports League may host a special tournament under these guidelines.

9.2 Rules: Tournaments shall follow the same on-court rules and regulations as the regular season. See Sections 1-8.

9.3 Eligibility: To play in the tournaments, each player must qualify under these guidelines.

a) **Play on the competing team:** Either as a regular roster player, a roster replacement player, or a sub, for at least 1/3 of the regular season matches.

b) **Roster:** Must be on the team's roster submitted prior to the tournament.

c) **Tournament Substitutions:** There are no on-site / last-minute substitutions during the season ending tournaments that don't fit the above criteria.

d) **Roster Replacement Players:** After a season begins, if a player has been removed from a team's roster either by injury or by any other reason, that player may be replaced by another player added to the roster.

D1: The player "dropping off" of the roster does not receive a refund.

D2: The replacement player must pay the full, regular rate, registration fee, minus any substitution fees paid, had they played previously on the same team during that season.

9.4 Seeding: Tournament seeds will be based on regular season (or pool play) placings. Every team makes the playoffs – single elimination standard bracket format.

Ties are broken (for seeding purposes):

A1) First by direct Game-to-Game record.

A2) Then, if the same, by greatest number of games / points earned in the season.

A3) Then, if the same, by smallest games / points scored against (among all teams).

A4) Then, if the same, by coin toss.

9.5 Game Tie Breakers: All games and matches play until a winner is declared.

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