

DIRIGO HOCKEY LEAGUE RULEBOOK



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Preamble:

The following rules and regulations govern all aspects of participation in the Dirigo Hockey League. They are designed to ensure fairness, safety, and consistency for all players, teams, and officials throughout the season. All participants are expected to understand and abide by these rules as a condition of league involvement.

ARTICLE I – PLAYER ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION

1. Players must be 18 years old to participate in the Dirigo Hockey League. Players who are not 18 on the first night of play may join later in the season but will not receive a playoff exemption due to age.
2. All players must be registered with the current Dirigo governing body (i.e. AAU, USA Hockey etc.). *Note: governing body may require team registration in addition to individual.*
3. Payments are collected from the team captains. Players needing or requesting a refund must work with their team captain.

ARTICLE II – TEAMS AND TEAM ROSTERS

Section A – Team Classification

The Dirigo Hockey League reserves the right to implement divisions (A, B, C) and move teams among divisions if the Dirigo Hockey Committee deems necessary based on the scores and competitiveness of the league. If scores and competitiveness are close then teams will remain in one division until playoffs, at which point the top teams will compete for a championship and the bottom teams will play consolation games.

Section B – Team Registration and Fees

1. Team captains must collect governing body registrations (i.e. AAU/USA Hockey) from all players on their roster. This is to be submitted to the league coordinator along with jersey numbers.
2. All team fees are due before the first game of the season. If more teams register than available slots, then priority will be given to 1. Teams in the league in the prior season and 2. Payment of league fees.
3. Once a team is registered, there will be no refunds.

Section C – Team Rosters

1. A maximum of twenty-five (25) players are allowed on a team's roster. Any player who appears in at least one game occupies one of those 25 spots for the season. Full-time goalies count toward the roster limit, but substitute goalies and players from the player pool do not.
2. Players may only be on one team roster per season. This rule applies to anyone listed on a team's initial roster who has played in at least one regular season game. Once a player appears in a game for their rostered team, they are not eligible to play for another team until the following season. Players who enter the league through free agency are not subject to this rule and will remain in the player pool until selected by a team.
3. Goalies are allowed to substitute as often as necessary and for as many teams as necessary during the regular season. Goalies not rostered for a team may also substitute for teams but must turn in a governing body registration to the league coordinator.

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4. Rosters remain open during the regular season to support league growth and viability, but only full-time players (those who have appeared in at least 20% of regular season games rounded up) are eligible for playoffs. Exceptions may be granted for verified medical issues, family emergencies, work travel, military service, or school-related absences, pending approval by the Dirigo Hockey Committee. Requests must be submitted at least 30 days before the playoffs. Players rostered on non-club NCAA teams are not eligible for exemptions. Rosters are frozen for the final two regular season games to ensure fairness for all teams.

Section D – Policing of Rosters

1. Referees will check rosters at the beginning of each game. Any team found playing with a non-rostered player or player from another team will forfeit the game (recorded as a 3-0 loss) and may face further league discipline.

Section E – Team Uniforms

1. Each team is responsible for providing their own jerseys with a unique color scheme and numbers. All players (except the goalie) are required to be in matching uniforms. Captains should always maintain “spare” jerseys to ensure this policy is met. To ensure compliance, captains are expected to plan ahead in the offseason so that all jerseys are ready by opening night.

2. If the referees determine that the jerseys of the teams are too alike to officiate the games effectively the visiting team may be asked to turn their jerseys inside out or wear practice jerseys.

Section F – Player Pool & Free Agency

1. The league will maintain a player pool of substitute players who are not full-time members of any team. This pool is composed of players entering the league via free agency and is intended to help teams with short rosters on a week-to-week basis during regular season games.

2. Teams may borrow players from the pool for individual games without being required to sign them to their roster. Players may appear for multiple teams throughout the season, provided they do not appear in 20% or more of any one team’s regular season games (rounded up). Reaching this threshold automatically designates them as a full-time member of that team and makes them ineligible for the pool or other teams for the remainder of the season.

3. Pool players are available on a first-come, first-served basis and may choose which team they are or are not willing to play for.

4. Players listed on a team’s opening roster are only eligible for the player pool if they do not play in any regular season games for their original team. Once they play a game for their originally rostered team, they are ineligible for free agency until the following season.

ARTICLE III – PLAYING RULES

Section A – Playing Rules

Section Six of the USA Hockey Rulebook (“Playing Rules”) will serve as the foundation for the Dirigo Hockey League’s playing rules, with specific amendments outlined in this rulebook. Notable amendments include blue line icing, NHL-length penalties, and major penalties for all body checking infractions. The league coordinator will ensure that game officials follow the USA Hockey Rulebook and are properly informed of all Dirigo-specific modifications.

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Section B – League Format

1. The number of regular season games each team is guaranteed will be based on the total number of teams registered. The season will run from mid-September to mid-March, with no games scheduled on Super Bowl Sunday or major holidays.
2. Each game will begin with a three-minute warm-up, followed by three 12-minute stop-time periods. The warm-up clock will start whether or not teams are on the ice. Officials are instructed to keep games within a one-hour time slot and may use running time in the third period if necessary. If the goal differential is three goals or less, the final two minutes of the game will be played with stop time. Teams should be ready one minute before the scheduled start of each game.
3. Points will be awarded as follows: two (2) points for a win, one (1) point for a tie, and zero (0) points for a loss. If the game is ahead of schedule, referees may choose to allow a five-minute, 3-on-3 overtime period, but this is at referee discretion and not guaranteed.

Section C – Penalties & Suspensions

1. To encourage clean play, the Dirigo Hockey League follows NHL-standard penalty lengths regardless of period duration: two (2) minutes for minor penalties, five (5) minutes for major penalties, and ten (10) minutes for misconducts. All misconducts are reviewed by the Dirigo Hockey Committee for potential suspension. Suspension decisions must be made before the player's team's next scheduled game.
2. If a player is suspended and there are not enough regular season and/or playoff games remaining for them to complete their suspension, the suspension will carry over into the next Dirigo Hockey League season that they are registered.
3. If a player participates in a game while under suspension, or if a team uses an illegal player (such as a suspended, unregistered, or rostered player from another team), all involved players may face suspension, as determined by the Dirigo Hockey Committee. The game will also be forfeited by a score of 3-0. A second offense may result in the team's expulsion from the league without a refund.
4. Off-ice altercations that happen on the premises of the rink facilities (including parking lot) will result in suspension from the league.
5. The Dirigo Hockey Committee reserves the right to suspend or permanently ban any player who consistently violates league rules, displays poor sportsmanship, or, in the committee's judgment, poses a risk to the health and safety of other participants. This includes, but is not limited to, players who habitually receive game misconducts, engage in fighting, threaten officials, or attempt to injure others. Any action taken by the committee will be in addition to any penalties assessed by on-ice officials.
6. Checking and Slashing Major Penalties– If a player receives a 5-minute major for any checking or slashing penalty, it will result in the following:
 - Second offense: One Game Suspension
 - Third offense: Three Game Suspension
 - Fourth offense: Ineligible for remainder of the season.
7. Fighting / Third Man in Penalties: a player receiving one of these penalties will result in the following:

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- First offense: Three Game Suspension
- Second offense: Ineligible for remainder of the season

8. Match Penalties – Any player assessed a match penalty must attend a hearing with the Dirigo Hockey Committee, the League Coordinator, the Player Representative, and the Conduct Representative. The player must comply with the committee's decision before being allowed to return to play.

Section D – Dirigo Hockey League Rule Amendments

1. There will be no red line. Icing is determined by the defending team's blue line.
2. A game may begin with six skaters if a goalie is unavailable. If no goalie arrives by the start of the second period, the game will proceed with running time. Teams may not request a delayed start for lack of a goalie.
3. No player is permitted to step onto the ice surface before the Zamboni has exited and the doors closed. Any violation of this rule will result in a two (2) minute minor penalty, which will be assessed at the start of the game.
4. There will be no time-outs during any game, until the playoffs, where there will be one per team.
5. The Dirigo Hockey League does not enforce a formal "mercy rule," recognizing that ice time is often more valuable to players than the score. However, if a team leads by 8 or more goals in the third period, the leading team may request running time, which will be granted.

ARTICLE IV – PLAYOFFS

1. Tiebreakers in the standings will be applied in the following order: (1) head-to-head results, (2) total number of wins, and (3) goal differential.
2. Playoffs will be single elimination.
3. Playoff games tied at the end of regulation will proceed to a 12-minute 3-on-3 overtime period with teams switching sides. If still tied, a best-of-three NHL-style shootout will follow. If tied after three shooters, a sudden death shootout will determine the winner. Players serving penalties are not eligible to participate in the shootout.
4. Each team will be allowed one time-out per game.
5. Only players who meet the 20% participation requirement outlined in Article II are eligible for playoffs. Exceptions for goalies will be subject to a vote by the Dirigo Hockey Committee with the requesting team ineligible to vote.
6. The top half of teams will qualify for the playoffs. However, if the total number of teams is not divisible by four, the league may include all teams in the playoff bracket to ensure a balanced format.