

**USA<sup>TM</sup>**  
**LACROSSE**



**2026 GIRLS' YOUTH LACROSSE**  
**RULES INTERPRETATION**

**BARB MARTINICHIO – RULES SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR | DECEMBER 2025**



# POINTS OF EMPHASIS - YOUTH

## TREATMENT OF OFFICIALS

- Poor treatment of officials remains a persistent problem
- Officials deserve respect and dignity
- Poor sportsmanship, verbal abuse, and harassment of officials should not be tolerated
- Mistreatment of officials contradicts the values of lacrosse



# POINTS OF EMPHASIS - YOUTH

## ILLEGAL STICK TO BODY CONTACT

- Safe use of the stick essential to avoid injuries
- Youth rules prohibit defenders from initiating stick to body contact
- Coaches should reinforce proper use of the stick especially by defenders
- Officials should penalize illegal stick to body contact



# POINTS OF EMPHASIS - YOUTH

## OFFICIATING 3-SECONDS GOOD DEFENSE

- Rule applies to the player with the ball, not a defender
- Rule applies when an offensive player holds the ball for more than 3- seconds when being closely guarded
- 3-second good defense rule rewards defenders when the use proper defensive positioning



# POINTS OF EMPHASIS - YOUTH

## OFFICIATING FORCING THROUGH

- Forcing through is a foul against an attack player
- Occurs when an attack player forces their crosse through a defender or defenders crosse
- Defenders in legal position should not be penalized when an opponent forces their crosse through defenders crosse



# RULE CHANGE – YOUTH

## GOAL CIRCLE DEPUTY RULES

- Deputy goalkeeper allowed at 14U play
- NFHS Rules 7-1 & 3 govern deputy goalkeepers

### NFHS

### Rule **7** Goal Circle

#### SECTION 1 GOAL CIRCLE RULES

**ART. 1 . . .** Only one player, either the goalkeeper or the deputy, is permitted in the goal circle at any one time. A ball resting on any part of the goal line belongs to the goalkeeper or deputy.

#### SECTION 3 DEPUTY RULES

**ART. 1 . . .** The deputy:

- May only enter or remain in the goal circle when the deputy's team has possession of the ball.
- Must immediately leave the goal circle when the deputy's team loses possession of the ball.
- May go into the goal circle to prevent a rolling ball from crossing the goal line.
- While within the goal circle must clear the ball within 10 seconds after it has entered the goal circle.
- While within the goal circle may play the ball with the hand, place it in the crosse and proceed with the game. The deputy may not throw it by hand.



# YOUTH RULES COMPARISON CHART



## 2026 GIRLS YOUTH RULES COMPARISON

Category	6U & 8U	10U	12U	14U
PLAYERS	3v3 up to 7v7	3v3 up to 8v8 with goalkeeper	NFHS	NFHS
GOALKEEPER	Goalkeeper optional, not recommended for 6U, no deputy goalkeeper	Goalkeeper optional, no deputy goalkeeper	<u>No deputy goalkeeper</u>	NFHS
BALLS	Soft balls or NOCSAE lacrosse balls	NFHS	NFHS	NFHS
EYE WEAR	Required if NOCSAE balls used	NFHS	NFHS	NFHS
STICKS	Small stick allowed, no pocket limits	Small stick allowed, modified pocket	NFHS	NFHS
FIELD SIZE	Cross field	Cross field	NFHS	NFHS
FIELD LINES	Goal circle, center line, 8M arc optional	Goal circle, center line, 8M arc if goalkeeper used	NFHS	NFHS
GOALS	3'x3' or 4'x4'	4'x4' or NFHS	NFHS	NFHS

PLAYERS, EQUIPMENT, FIELD



# YOUTH RULES COMPARISON CHART



## 2026 GIRLS YOUTH RULES COMPARISON

Category	6U & 8U	10U	12U	14U
<b>LENGTH OF GAME</b>	<b><u>6 to 8-minute quarters, running clock</u></b>	<b><u>Up to 10-minute quarters, running clock.</u></b>	<b><u>10-minute quarters, running clock</u></b>	<b><u>12-minute quarters, running clock</u></b>
<b>TIMEOUTS</b>	<b>1 team timeout</b>	<b>1 team timeout</b>	<b>NFHS: 2 team timeouts</b>	<b>NFHS: 2 team timeouts</b>
<b>START OF GAME AND QUARTERS</b>	<b>No draw, players line up in defensive end 5 yds from center</b>	<b>Draw optional, players line up in defensive end 5 yds from center</b>	<b>NFHS</b>	<b>NFHS</b>
<b>START AFTER GOAL</b>	<b>Ball to defender at side of goal circle, all players 4M away, player self-starts</b>	<b>No Goalkeeper: ball to defender at side of goal circle, all players 4M away, player self-starts Goalkeeper: goalkeeper clear, all players outside 8M arc.</b>	<b>NFHS : Draw unless mercy rule in effect</b>	<b>NFHS: Draw unless mercy rule in effect</b>
<b>SELF-START</b>	<b>Players must pause before self-starting</b>	<b>Players must pause before self-starting</b>	<b>Players must pause before self-starting</b>	<b>Players must pause before self-starting</b>
<b>OFFSIDES</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>No more than 5 field players in offensive and defensive ends</b>	<b>NFHS</b>	<b>NFHS</b>

**TIMING, STARTS/RESTARTS, OFFSIDES**



# YOUTH RULES COMPARISON CHART



## 2026 GIRLS YOUTH RULES COMPARISON

Category	6U & 8U	10U	12U	14U
COVERING BALL	No covering ball with stick or body	No covering ball with stick or body	NFHS	NFHS
<u>CHECKING</u>	<u>No checking</u>	<u>No checking</u>	<u>Modified checking</u>	<u>Transitional checking</u>
DEFENSE 1v1	1v1 defense required in midfield	1v1 defense in midfield	NFHS	NFHS
PENALTY TIME	Players leave field briefly for major fouls	Players leave field briefly for major fouls	NFHS	NFHS
CARDS	No cards, teams do not play short	No cards, teams do not play short	NFHS	NFHS
DEFENDING GOAL	No defending goal 5-yard in front of goal unless marking an opponent	No defending goal 5-yard in front of goal unless marking an opponent	NFHS	NFHS
<u>3-SECONDS CLOSELY GUARDED</u>	<u>3-Seconds closely guarded rule applies</u>	<u>3-Seconds closely guarded rule applies</u>	<u>3-Seconds closely guarded rule applies</u>	<u>NFHS: Not applicable</u>
3-SECONDS IN 8M ARC	Not applicable	Not applicable	NFHS	NFHS

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# RULE CHANGE – HIGH SCHOOL

## CROSSE INSPECTION

### 2-4-5 - SUMMARY

- Stick checks allowed during 5 game situations
- Stick checks allowed:
  - Prior to the draw
  - Following goals
  - During quarter breaks and halftime
  - During a team time-out
  - Prior to the start of overtime



# RULE CHANGE – HIGH SCHOOL

## ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

### 2-8-3 – SUMMARY

- Illegal for a field player to wear audio or video devices during the game
- Exception for medical accommodations approved by state association
- Coach misconduct penalty



# RULE CHANGE – HIGH SCHOOL

## TEAM TIMEOUTS

### 4-3-3d – SUMMARY

- If a possession time-out is called when ball is in goal circle,
  - Play resumes at the closest dot unless play restarts with a free position
  - Any player may restart when play resumes at the dot



# RULE CHANGE – HIGH SCHOOL

## STARTING PLAY – DRAW

### 5-2 PENALTY 1 - Summary

- When a player draws illegally,
  - Free position will be at the spot of the ball
  - Any player may take the free position
- Self-start is permitted unless the clock is stopped



# RULE CHANGE – HIGH SCHOOL

## GOAL CIRCLE

### 7-3 PENALTIES 1A, 3A – SUMMARY

- When a goal circle foul is committed,
  - Offending player moves 4 meters away from the free position
  - Offender is no longer placed 4 meters behind the free position



# NOTABLE EDITORIAL CHANGE – HIGH SCHOOL

## EYE SHADE

### 2-7-6 SUMMARY

- Eye shade:
  - May include grease, no-glare strips, and stickers
  - Must be one solid stroke with no words, numbers, logos or other symbols
  - Shall not extend beyond width of eye socket or below cheekbone



# RULES RESOURCES – YOUTH

## USAL 2026 GIRLS LACROSSE YOUTH RULES BOOK

- <https://www.usalacrosse.com/girls-and-womens-rules>

## USAL 2026 GIRLS YOUTH RULES COMPARISON

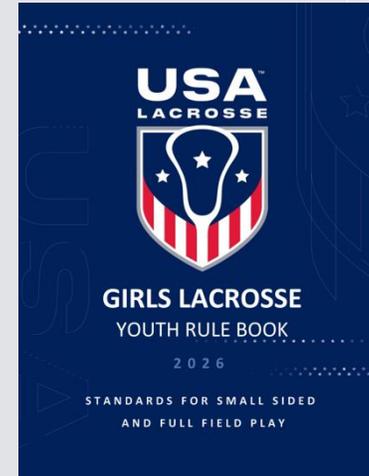
- <https://www.usalacrosse.com/girls-and-womens-rules>

## USAL 2026 GIRLS YOUTH LACROSSE RULES INTERPRETATION

- <https://www.usalacrosse.com/girls-and-womens-rules>

## USAL RULE QUESTIONS AND INTERPRETATION REQUESTS

- [girlsrules@usalacrosse.com](mailto:girlsrules@usalacrosse.com)



Category	USA Lacrosse	NFHS	IFHS	IFHS
BALLS	Both balls or NCAA approved ball	NFHS	NFHS	NFHS
CHASE	No chases, teams do not play a shot	No chases, teams do not play a shot	NFHS	NFHS
CHECKING	No checking	No checking	Restricted checking	Unrestricted checking
COVERING BALL	No covering ball with stick or body	No covering ball with stick or body	NFHS	NFHS
DEFENDING GOAL	No defending goal by standing in the 3 yard space in front of goal unless marking an opponent	No defending goal by standing in the 3 yard space in front of goal unless marking an opponent	NFHS	NFHS
DEFENSE 1:1	1:1 defense required at all times	1:1 defense required at all times	Not required	Not required
EYE WEAR	Required if NCAA/CAA rules are used	Required if NCAA/CAA rules are used	NFHS	NFHS
FIELD LINES	Goal circle, center line, 30' are optional	Goal circle, center line, 30' are optional	NFHS	NFHS
FIELD SIZE	Cross field	Cross field	Full field	Full field
GOALKEEPER	Goalkeeper optional, not recommended for 8U, 9U, 10U	Goalkeeper optional, not recommended for 8U, 9U, 10U	No deputy goalkeeper	NFHS
GOALS	7' x 4' or 6' x 6'	4' x 4' or 6' x 6'	NFHS	NFHS
LENGTH OF GAME	6 to 8-minute quarters, varying clock	Up to 15-minute quarters, varying clock	10-minute quarters, varying clock	12-minute quarters, varying clock
OFFSIDES	Not applicable	No more than 3 field players in offensive half during play	NFHS	NFHS
PENALTY TIME	Players leave field briefly for minor infractions	Players leave field briefly for minor infractions	NFHS	NFHS
PLAYERS	3v3 up to 7v7	3v3 up to 7v7	NFHS	NFHS
SELF-START	Players must pause before self-starting	Players must pause before self-starting	NFHS	NFHS
START OF GAME AND QUARTERS	No time, quarters 10 or 15 minutes	10 or 15 minutes, quarters 10 or 15 minutes	NFHS	NFHS
START AFTER GOAL	Ball to defender at side of goal circle, all players may play after self-start	No Goalkeeper: ball to defender at side of goal circle, all players may play after self-start	Draw unless mercy rule in effect	Draw unless mercy rule in effect
STICKS	Small stick allowed, no pocket sticks	Small stick allowed, no pocket sticks	NFHS	NFHS
3-SECONDS CLOSELY GUARDED	3 seconds closely guarded rule applies	3 seconds closely guarded rule applies	Not applicable	Not applicable
3-SECONDS IN END	Not applicable	Not applicable	NFHS	NFHS
TIMEOUTS	1 team timeout	1 team timeout	2 team timeouts	2 team timeouts



## 2026 GIRLS' YOUTH LACROSSE RULES WEBINAR



**THANK YOU**  
**for attending tonight's**  
**2026 Girls' Youth Rules**  
**Interpretation!!**



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