

Glacier Hockey League Policies and Rules

Updated August 2025



The Glacier Hockey League (GHL) is a recreational adult hockey program operated by Glacier Ice Rink. The policies and rules outlined here are intended to provide a safe and enjoyable hockey experience for league players.

These policies apply to all GHL games, including fall, winter and spring sessions. Players who have questions or need clarification should contact the Adult Hockey Director (AHD).

General

- The GHL is sanctioned by USA Hockey, the national governing body of the sport, and the Montana Amateur Hockey Association, the state affiliate of USA Hockey. All GHL programs are subject to the rules and regulations of these organizations.
- Players must register with USA Hockey and have a current membership prior to registering for the GHL. This membership ID number is obtained directly through USA Hockey at an additional charge. Players are responsible for entering their number into their [DASH](#) account.
- Players register individually through the league's DASH registration system. Team requests and composition will be determined by the Adult Hockey Director in advance of the season.
- League standings, schedules and rosters are accessed only through DASH and GameSheet. GameSheet is utilized as an electronic scoring system.
- The GHL does not provide jerseys for teams. Teams must have **numbered** jerseys for each player, ideally with a light and dark set.
- The league contracts with the Missoula Referee Association to provide two USA Hockey certified officials for each game.
- The GHL follows USA Hockey rules. Per USA Hockey, the league will not tolerate abusive behavior, including hateful or discriminatory language.

Rosters and Divisions

- All rosters are finalized and frozen on week seven during the winter season. Any team wishing to add additional players after this deadline must submit a written request to the AHD, who will approve or deny the request, based on the circumstances.
- Players may play in multiple divisions each season. However, players may not play in a division more than one level up or down, e.g., a Cup player may not also play down in Competitive, or a Novice player may not play up in Competitive. Playing in three divisions does not bypass this rule.
- **Note – this rule is being evaluated and will be updated by the captains meeting on October 13, 2025.**

Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

- Alcohol is not permitted on the players' benches and penalty boxes.
- Per Missoula County regulations, tobacco, tobacco substitutes (ZYN etc.), and marijuana use of any type is prohibited on the Fairgrounds premises, including the indoor and outdoor rinks.
- Game officials have the authority to assess bench minor penalties to those in violation of alcohol and tobacco rules.
- Game officials, Glacier Ice Rink staff, and/or the AHD reserve the right to remove ANY intoxicated/impaired players who jeopardize the safety of themselves, other players, officials, or staff.

Game Format

- Games are played under current USA Hockey (USAH) rules.
- Games consist of three 17-minute run-time periods, with a three-minute warm up.
- The last 30 seconds of the first and second periods are stop time.
- The last five minutes of the third period are stop time if the game is within two goals.
- Each team is allowed a one-minute timeout per game.
- The ice will be resurfaced between games for all divisions. Players may not enter the ice surface until the Zamboni has left the ice and the Zamboni doors are shut.
- Slapshots are allowed in all divisions, except Novice and Hang Loose C. A slapshot is defined as a shot with the stick above the player's waist.

Overtime – Regular Season Games

- Overtime is sudden death, three-on-three for three minutes stop time.
- A penalty that occurs during overtime results in a penalty shot.
- If a team goes into overtime with a penalty, overtime will be played four-on-three until the penalty expires. When the penalty expires, the penalized player may proceed onto the ice and teams will play four-on-four until the next stoppage. After the stoppage, play returns to three-on-three.
- Games end in a tie if no one scores during overtime.

Penalty Minute Standards

- Minor penalties are three minutes during run time or two minutes during stop time.
- Double Minors are six minutes during run time or four minutes during stop time.
- Major penalties are five minutes. Major penalties DO NOT expire if a goal is scored.
- Misconducts are 10 minutes. A second misconduct in the same game results in a Game Misconduct.

- Game Misconducts result in an ejection plus a one-game suspension. 10 minutes will be added to the player's PIM stats.

Penalty Minute Thresholds

- Winter leagues: Players receive a one-game suspension when they reach 40 penalty minutes within one division (including playoffs). Fall and Spring Leagues: Players receive a one-game suspension when they reach 30 penalty minutes within one division.
- Players receive a two-game suspension at 60 penalty minutes within the same division (including playoffs).

Suspensions

- On-ice infractions called by USA Hockey officials are final and may not be appealed.
- GHL administration reserves the right to issue supplemental discipline beyond the minimum USAH rulebook requirements. If additional suspension is considered, the player will be offered a hearing in accordance with USAH's hearing procedures.
- If a player is suspended for one or more games, but plays in multiple divisions, the suspension must be upheld in the division that the original infraction occurred. **The player may not participate in any other games until their suspension is served in the division in which the incident occurred.**
- Players serving suspensions may not sit on or near their team's bench or the penalty box.
- Automatic Progressive Suspensions
 - Players who receive a third Major penalty during the same season, within the same division, will receive a three-game suspension.
 - Any player assessed a fourth Major will receive a five-game suspension. If a player receives a fifth Major, the player will be suspended until a hearing is conducted by a discipline committee.
- Match Penalties
 - A player who receives a Match penalty is suspended from ALL GHL games and USAH programs until a USAH Match penalty hearing is held. A discipline committee will conduct the hearing and determine if additional sanctions are warranted.
 - Match penalty suspensions administered by the GHL may be given as a number of games or a period of time. Example: A player may be suspended for three games, or they may be suspended through the remainder of the winter season.
- Players suspended by USAH, the GHL, or Glacier Ice Rink will not receive compensation or prorated registrations fees for games missed while serving suspensions.

Ringer Rule

- A Ringer is defined as a player with an elevated skill set compared to other players in the division, and whose presence **consistently affects game outcomes in their team's favor** – either offensively or defensively.
- Ringers are identified only within Novice, Intermediate, Hang Loose B/C and Competitive divisions.
- Team captains may submit the name or number of a suspected Ringer to the AHD. The AHD and another evaluator will review and determine if the player qualifies as a Ringer. If confirmed, both the player and team captain will be notified.
- Confirmed Ringers will wear an additional item on their uniform (TBD) to indicate their status to officials, scorekeepers, and opponents. Ringers are limited to **one goal per game**.
- All additional goals scored by Ringers, purposely or accidentally, will be disallowed and the following face-off will be held in the offending team's defensive zone.
- A Ringer who blatantly ignores the NO SCORING sanction will incur a three-minute Minor penalty plus a 10-minute unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- Players with advanced skills who act as teachers or mentors to enhance the understanding and awareness of the game for others may be exempt from these sanctions.
- **Note – this rule is being evaluated and will be updated by the captains meeting on October 13, 2025.**

Team Composition and Illegal Players

- According to USA Hockey rules, a team must start a game with a MINIMUM of six players. If a team is reduced to fewer than four players (i.e., three of the six players serving overlapping penalties), the game will be declared a forfeit.
- Teams with less than six players on a given night may request substitute players. **Substitutes must be currently registered GHL players in the same or a lower division.** Requests for subs must be presented to the opposing team captain before the game begins. The opposing team captain has three options:
 1. Deny the request and require the opposing team to play with their existing number of at least six players. If less than six, a forfeit is declared.
 2. Approve the request and allow substitute players. Stats will be recorded, and game results will be final.
 3. Allow subs, have the game declared a forfeit, and play a "friendly game" with no statistics recorded (except PIM).
- If a team is caught playing with illegal players or unapproved subs, the **captain of the offending team will serve a one game suspension**, the game will be rendered a (1 to 0) forfeit, and all statistics (except PIM) will go unrecorded.
- The identification of illegal players must be submitted to the AHD within 24 hours after the game.

Playoff Rules and Format

- Game format is the same as regular season, except where noted below within the overtime rules.
- Playoffs are single elimination until the final round, which is a best-of-three series (winter season only). Shoulder seasons are one game based on standings.
- Overtime in Preliminary Playoff Rounds
 - Playoff overtime for all preliminary rounds and Toilet Bowl Championships consists of a sudden death, three-on-three OT period for **five minutes** stop time. All penalties result in a penalty shot. The penalty shot must be taken by the player who was infringed by the penalty.
 - If game remains tied after the overtime, a three-man shootout will take place (Highest seed chooses who shoots first). If the game is not decided during the three-man shootout, the teams will continue in a sudden death format until all players on the team have taken a turn with the shootout. Players may not shoot twice until all eligible players have shot once.
- Overtime in Final Rounds
 - Playoff overtime during winter season **finals** is a sudden death, five-on-five 17-minute RUN TIME period with standard penalty rules. If the game is still tied, teams will play a three-on-three sudden death OT period for 5 minutes STOP TIME.
 - **Penalties during overtime 3v3 finals are PENALTY SHOTS.** The team on the power play will play four-on-three for two minutes. When the penalty expires, the penalized player may leave the box and the team plays 4-on-4 until the next stoppage of play, then returns to three-on-three. If the game is still tied, the 3-on-3 format will be repeated until a winner is decided.
- Any players with an outstanding GHL balance are ineligible for playoffs.
- Any team using illegal players or unapproved subs will forfeit the game and be automatically eliminated from post-season play.
- Playoff seeding is based on the number of points accumulated during the regular season. Reseeding will occur once the bracket begins with the lowest remaining seed playing the highest.
- In the event of teams being tied in points, the tie-breaker protocol is as follows:
 1. Most points
 2. Most wins
 3. Fewest goals against
 4. Most goals for
- PLEASE NOTE: DASH and/or GameSheet software may not recognize these tie-breakers. Final seeding will be done and posted by the AHD after all regular season games are completed.

Communication

- Players should communicate with their team captain regarding any questions or concerns that arise during the season. The captain may then contact the AHD with the concern.
- If the issue is not resolved by the AHD, the captain may elevate the concern to the Executive Director.
- For any issues of frustration or anger regarding a game, the captain must wait 24 hours before approaching the AHD. This allows time for emotions to cool down so the issue can be addressed rationally.

Program Refunds

- Players may receive a full refund of fees if they cancel their registration before the league begins.
- A partial refund will be issued if the cancellation occurs before the 3/4 point in the program. The refund will be prorated for the remaining weeks based on the fee paid (*e.g., fall GHL is \$156 for eight weeks, so each remaining game would be prorated at \$19.50 per game*).
- The prorated amount is based on when the refund request was received and does not apply to prior games missed.
- No refunds will be given if the cancellation occurs three-quarters or more through the season. Special situations may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the AHD.
- Players serving a suspension will not receive prorated registrations fees for games missed while serving the suspension.
- All requests for refunds must be submitted *in writing* via email to the AHD. The prorated amount will be based on when the communication is received.
- Refunds will be issued back to the credit card on file. Account credits may be issued in certain situations.

Late Registrations

- Late registrations will be accepted if there is available space on teams, and if the request is received before team rosters are frozen.
- The registration fee will be a prorated amount for the number of weeks remaining, based on the program cost, plus any late fees.

Payment Plans

- Payment plans are available for the winter hockey season only.
- Payment plans require a 1/3 payment at time of registration. There will be an additional payment plan fee of \$15 attached to all payment plans.