



COOL RULES

* IS THE *

E

very four years, USA Hockey reviews its playing rules as a way to advance the sport and make it as competitive and fun as possible.

The process starts the summer before with rule change proposals submitted to USA Hockey. Following a review by several groups,

including the playing rules committee and the board of directors, the rules are voted on at USA Hockey's Annual Congress.

Several rule changes have been the talk of the young season, and USA Hockey wants to clarify why some of these changes were made and why they will help make our game safer and promote skill development.

* What Are This Year's Changes?

The rule book language has been updated to emphasize the principles outlined in

the "Declaration of Safety, Fair Play and Respect." These include eliminating hits that are meant to punish or intimidate an opponent or where there is no effort to win possession of the puck.

Additionally, the offside rule eliminates tag-up offside at all youth and girls levels of play. Immediate offside is now applied at all levels except high school and adult classifications.

New rules implemented by USA Hockey's board of directors are designed to make the game safer and promote skill development.

Another notable rule change is that players may not legally ice the puck while on the penalty kill, with high school and adult classifications again being excluded.

The final major notable rule change is changing "body contact" to "competitive contact" to emphasize any contact within the sport as being competitive in nature, with aims to possess the puck, and is encouraged at all levels of play.

* Will The Offside Rule Make Games Last Longer?

While games early in the season may see an uptick in additional whistles, research shows that once players get used to the rules, the change adds only two additional whistles to the game while increasing the number of quality hockey decisions.

It's important that those playing defense learn how to gather the puck, look up and find either an outlet pass or a way to possess the puck. Additionally, the emphasis is on forwards finding creative solutions in the neutral zone while not dumping the puck when a teammate is offside.

* Why Is There A Whistle When A Penalty Killer Ices The Puck?

This is another instance of rules being created to develop better hockey players, and to create a game that is more fun and competitive.

Instead of changing the playing rules to allow the penalized team an advantage, this rule keeps the normal 5 on 5 rules in play during a penalty. This rule change keeps normal competitive situations, such as working to creatively possess the puck to center ice prior to dumping the puck or advancing into the offensive zone.

This rule change encourages players to think through solutions such as finding an open teammate, clearing the puck partially down the ice or possessing the puck to center ice before dumping it into the opponent's end.

This will also provide a proper advantage to the power play, which has earned the offensive advantage by forcing a penalty.

* What Is The Declaration?

In June of 2019, the USA Hockey Board of Directors passed the Declaration of Safety, Fair Play and Respect to influence a better hockey culture, with an emphasis on eliminating illegal hits in the game.

Body checking is a skill, just like skating or shooting a puck. Legal body checking is a skill to win possession of the puck through



* Why Are Rules Different For High School Players?

The only rule changes that high school players were not affected by were the new offside rule and the ability to ice the puck while shorthanded. This was done by USA Hockey in an effort to create a four-year grace period for students to play through, while youth level players are taught the new rules. In four years, the objective is to have youth and high school leagues playing by the same offside rule.

High school players must abide by USA Hockey's rule book language changes that have been updated to emphasize the principles outlined in the Declaration of Safety, Fair Play and Respect, emphasizing any contact within the sport as being competitive in nature with the aim to possess the puck.

* Why Doesn't USA Hockey Follow The NHL Rule Book?

This is a common question asked throughout our hockey community. The NHL is the best league in the world, with the best players in the world. It is a business built for fan entertainment.

USA Hockey's foundation is creating a game that is fun and competitive for youth and adult players. None of these players are professional, and most will never be professional hockey players. Therefore, USA Hockey's rule book and the NHL rule book will always be different.

However, there are many instances and examples historically of USA Hockey, the NHL, and even the International Ice Hockey Federation, adopting rules from one another after they've been studied and analyzed. ☆

proper angling and physical engagement. Illegal body checking is when a player attempts to punish or intimidate an opponent, especially with a hit to the head, hit from behind or a late hit. This should never occur in youth hockey.

* Is USA Hockey Looking To Eliminate Physical Play From The Game?

No. USA Hockey is changing the culture of body checking, eliminating body checks that are delivered to a vulnerable or defenseless opponent, are done solely for the purpose of punishing or intimidating an opponent, or are delivered using the hands, stick, elbows or forearm with no effort to gain possession of the puck.

It is based on two core principles: 1) the opponent must be in control of the puck to be eligible to be body checked, and 2) the purpose of the body check must be to gain possession of the puck.

Therefore the stick of the player delivering the check should be below the knees, with an effort to win possession of the puck. The responsibility is on the player delivering the check to avoid placing a vulnerable or defenseless opponent in danger of potential injury by not hitting from behind, not hitting in the head and not hitting an opponent who does not have control of the puck.