

Modified Field Hockey Rules: Lehigh Valley Youth Field Hockey League

Updated: 2/22/2026

I. LEAGUE PHILOSOPHY & SPORTSMANSHIP

- **Mission:** To grow the game of field hockey in the Lehigh Valley while providing an age-appropriate competitive environment.
- **Focus:** Teams should focus on learning and progressing more than the score. Having fun is the priority.
- **Scorekeeping:** It is strongly suggested that the score is not kept at the 1st and 2nd-grade levels.
- **Score Gaps:** Do NOT run up the score. If a team is up by **3 goals**, coaches must implement Power Down Strategies.
- **Official Rules:** All PIAA Field Hockey rules (NFHS rulebook) apply unless modified below. Programs are encouraged to purchase a rulebook at: <https://www.nfhs.org/activities-sports/field-hockey/>

II. BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Coach Behavior

- **Field Access:** For all other ages, coaches must remain on the sideline behind the 5-yard markers.
- **Movement:** Coaches may only move between their own 25 and 50-yard lines. Do not cross to the other side of the field or in front of the opposing team.
- **Sideline Limit:** Maximum of 3 coaches or personnel allowed on the sideline (2 is preferred).
- **Official Interaction:** Role model respect for officials. Do not question calls during the game; speak to officials afterward if necessary.
- **Pre-Game Meeting:** Home coaches should initiate a meeting with the opponent to discuss Power Down expectations and collaborative instruction.

Spectator Behavior

- **Safety Zone:** Spectators must stay 5 feet back from the sideline (indicated by cones). No spectators are permitted behind the end line or goal area.
- **Prohibitions:** No smoking, vaping, weapons, grills, or alcoholic beverages.

- **Noise:** No air horns, sirens, whistles, or loud items that interfere with the official's whistle.
- **Animals:** No dogs allowed at many fields (check specific site rules).
- **Misconduct:** Spectators may not yell at coaches, refs, or players. The associated team will be penalized for spectator misconduct.

III. ELIGIBILITY & ROSTERS

- **Grade Level:** Players should play in their current school grade. Players may play **up** to assist a short team, but may **never** play down a grade level.
- **Anti-Stacking:** Multiple teams in one program must be equally skilled and balanced by grade (no "all 5th" and "all 6th" teams).
- **Co-Ed Play:** Up to two male players may be on the field at the same time.
- **Playing Time:** All players should receive equal playing time unless there is an injury.
- **Format:**
 - **Grades 1–6:** 6v6 play with **no goalkeepers**.
 - **Kindergarten:** 4v4 is optimal (determined by coaches).
 - **Optimal Roster Size:** 8–10 players.

IV. UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

- **Home/Away Colors:** Home wears **Dark** (socks and tops); Away wears **Light/White**.
- **Possession:** Home team starts with the ball. Away team chooses the side to defend and starts with the ball after halftime.
- **Pinnies:** If you do not have two uniform colors, you must provide your own pinnies.
- **Required Safety Gear: * Mouth Guards:** Must be a visible color (no clear) and cover all upper teeth. Players cannot "chew" them or keep them half-out.
 - **Shin Guards:** Required for all players.
 - **Goggles:** Must be specifically certified for field hockey.
- **Prohibitions:** No loose jewelry or hats with brims. Undergarments must be worn under the uniform.

V. FIELD SETUP & GAME LOGISTICS

- **Field Dimensions:** 50–60 yards long by 25–30 yards wide.
- **Cages:** Mouth opening must be between 65 and 75 inches (no full-sized cages).
- **Timing:** (Continuous clock – no timeouts)
 - **Grades 3/4 & 5/6:** 10-minute quarters.
 - **Grades 1/2:** 8-minute quarters.
 - **Breaks:** 2 minutes between quarters; 5-minute halftime.

- **Substitutions:** Unlimited rolling substitutions through the midfield area. No substitutions during penalty corners (except for injury). Players must wait for the teammate to leave before entering.

VI. GAME PLAY RULES

- **No Goalie Rule:** No player may act as a goalie or "camp" in front of the goal. Defenders must be within a stick's length of an opponent to be in that area.
- **Restarts:** Self-start is used at all levels. The ball must come to a complete stop first. All defenders must be 5 yards away.
- **Long Hit:** Awarded 5 yards outside the circle if the defense unintentionally hits the ball over the end line.
- **Entering the Circle (Grades 3–6):** For hits past midfield, the ball must be placed 5 yards outside the circle and move 5 yards (via pass or carry) before entering. No direct shots from the free hit.
- **Ball Contact:**
 - **Grades 1–4:** No "driving" (hands together). Hard pushes or slapshots only.
 - **Grades 5/6:** Driving is allowed if controlled and safe.
 - **Reverse Chips:** Strictly prohibited at all levels. Reverse sweeps (stick on ground) are legal.
- **Lifts & Aerials:**
 - **Grades 1/2:** No lifts or aerials.
 - **Grades 3/4:** Flicks/lifts below the knee are allowed.
 - **Grades 5/6:** Aerials allowed if not dangerous.
- **Safety Fouls:** Wild swings at rolling balls and stick interference (hitting, hooking, slashing) will be called and can result in cards.

VII. PENALTY CORNERS

- **Grades 3–6: * Defense:** 4 players on the end line (opposite the ball), 2 at midfield.
 - **Offense:** 5 players outside the circle, 1 inserter.
 - **Rules:** Corner masks recommended for 5/6. Inserter must wait for the whistle. The ball must leave the circle for play to continue.
- **Grades 1/2:** No penalty corners. Award a free hit (can go directly into the circle).

VIII. POWER DOWN STRATEGIES (Lead of 3+ Goals)

1. **Reposition:** Move lead scorers to defense and instruct them to pass rather than score.
2. **Rotate:** Move defensive players to attacking positions to learn new roles.
3. **No Self-Starts:** Force the team to use a pass on all free hits to allow the opponent a chance to intercept.
4. **3-Pass Rule:** Require 3 passes in the offensive half before a shot is taken.

5. **Switch the Field:** Use passes to move the ball to the other side of the field.
6. **Mandate Passing:** Tell players they may not dribble; they must only move the ball via passing.

**** Note: All rules are subject to change. Safety calls are at the discretion of the official on the field.*