



2026 Hockey Canada Rule Updates: What Players, Families & Coaches Need to Know

What's changing, what it means, and what you may notice at the rink.



HOCKEY CANADA

**PLAYING
RULES**

2026-2028

Most updates fall into three buckets:

BIG PICTURE

01

Penalty situations

02

Game flow / stoppages

03

Player and goaltender safety

These updates help everyone understand what officials are calling – and why.

Not every change affects every division, but awareness helps reduce confusion.

Penalty Situations

REFEREE SIGNALS

Tripping vs. Slew-Footing

What you may notice:

Officials now have more specific arm motion direction for these signals.

Tripping is front-to-back; slew-footing is back-to-front.

RULE 4.2 (b) – MINOR PENALTIES

How Goals Impact Minor Penalties

If a team scores while the other team is shorthanded – or about to become shorthanded because of a delayed minor – the minor penalty with the least time left ends.

Key takeaway: Delayed minor penalties now matter more when a goal is scored.

WHEN A GOAL IS SCORED: DOES A PENALTY END?

When a goal is scored (excluding a Penalty Shot) while time penalties are being served or signaled on delay, officials ask two questions:

- 1) Was the scored-on team shorthanded or about to be shorthanded?
 - 2) Was it because of a Minor or Bench Minor?
- If yes to both, the penalty with the least time remaining ends – except on a penalty shot goal.

RULE 4.14 – DEFERRED PENALTIES

Only two players from the same team can serve time penalties at once, and a team cannot play with fewer than three skaters plus a goalie.

A third penalty is “deferred” (formerly known as delayed).



Game flow & stoppages

RULE 6.1 (G) – CHANGE OF PLAYERS – U18 AAA: NET ACCIDENTALLY DISLODGED BY DEFENDING TEAM

In U18 AAA, if the defending team accidentally knocks the net off and play stops, that team cannot make a line change. This prevents teams from gaining an advantage from a stoppage.

RULE 6.7 – ICING THE PUCK – ICING SIGNAL UPDATE

When icing is called, the official who blows the whistle raises their non-whistle arm.

RULE 6.9 – HIGH-STICKING THE PUCK – HIGH-STICKING THE PUCK: GOALS

For goals involving a possible high stick of an attacking player, the key measurement is now the stick's contact point compared to the height of the crossbar. If the puck contacts the stick below the crossbar and goes directly in, the goal may count.



RULE 10.8 – REFUSING TO START PLAY

Teams, players, and team officials cannot suspend or end a game on their own. The Head Coach is responsible for the team's actions. **Important:** Penalties can include a Bench Minor, Penalty Shot in the final two minutes/overtime, Game Misconduct to the Head Coach, and forfeiture if play does not resume.



Goaltender Safety

RULE 6.18 – GOALTENDER SAFETY: U13 AND BELOW

In U13 and below, if a goalie is hit in the head by the puck, play stops as soon as it is safe – unless the puck deflects directly into the net. Safety comes first.

GOALTENDER HEAD CONTACT: WHAT COUNTS?

The rule refers to the goalie's mask/helmet, not throat protectors attached to the mask.

RULE 10.1 (A) – GOALTENDER AT THE BENCH ON A STOPPAGE

If the goalie leaves the crease to go to the bench during a stoppage, the team now has a new option: replace the goalie, keep the goalie in and take a minor penalty, play with six players, or (new) use a timeout if allowed. **Coaches should know their options before this happens.**

Final Takeaways

What Players Should Know:

Keep playing until the whistle.

What Coaches Should Know:

Know the penalty and goalie options.

What Families Should Know:

Some calls may look different because the rule interpretations have changed.

Everyone:

Ask questions respectfully – officials are applying updated Hockey Canada rules.

Want to learn more? Visit the GTHL Learning Centre – created with officials in mind, but filled with helpful resources and information for anyone looking to better understand the game: gthlcanada.com/the-learning-centre/