

Substantive Changes from the 2024-2025 Rules

USA Ultimate is releasing the following revisions to the Official Rules of Ultimate for 2026-2027. The reasons for these changes include the following:

- Clarifying previous rule inconsistencies, ambiguities, or omissions [clarity]
- Safety [safety]
- Reorganization to aid in rules comprehension [reorg]

The changes listed below do not represent the entirety of the changes. To see the complete set of changes, you can view the 2026-2027 Rules with tracked changes. Each substantive change listed below is tagged with the reason for the proposed change ([clarity], [safety], or [reorg]).

Goals and purpose of the USAU rules

USAU rules serve two conflicting purposes: providing a learning document for new players to guide gameplay, and serving as a comprehensive reference for all participants (players, observers, coaches). The first benefits from simplicity and brevity, while the second requires detailed explanations to ensure proper outcomes in nearly all situations. To address this, we will be releasing a simplified rules version focused primarily on learning. The 2026-2027 rules document will remain the foundation that the simplified version and other supplementary documents build on. Please keep this in mind when submitting feedback.

Section Reorganization Overview

As the rules evolved over time and revisions, many of the rules became buried several layers deep within the main sections and related rules were spread out in multiple parts of the document. To make it easier to digest, we have reorganized the main sections. Important concepts previously buried in subsections now have their own dedicated section (such as picks, fouls, travels, the pull, etc.) and related concepts previously fragmented throughout the document have been consolidated (such as Calling and Resolving Infractions). [reorg]

Spirit of the Game

Removed rules that were restating or summarizing rules that are specified in other rule sections. [reorg]

Equipment

5.A. Updated wording to clarify that a USA Ultimate approved disc must be used for sanctioned play, but other discs may be used in unsanctioned play. [clarity]

5.C. Explicitly allowed protective medical equipment when hard/sharp materials are covered and padded to prevent injury to others. [clarity] [safety]

Game Structure

6.D.4. Clarified how caps affect the game total when there is discussion that results in a goal being awarded. [clarity]

Timeouts

7.B.2. Clarified that sideline players and coaches may call timeouts in between points. [clarity]

7.C.4. Added that a team must announce the use of a timeout to avoid subbing a player calling a non-contact injury. If no announcement is made at the time, the opposing team cannot retroactively attempt to charge the injured player's team with a timeout. [clarity]

The Pull

9.D.4.a. False start and offsides will now accumulate together as "pull violations" instead of offsides accumulating in a separate bucket. [clarity]

9.K. Moved mixed play signals and timing to the Mixed Appendix. [reorg]

Making and Resolving Calls

17.C. Clarified how the Continuation Rule applies when a call is made when there is no thrower in possession of the disc and the disc is not in the air. [clarity]

17.C.6.b.3. Clarified that infringed players may recover relative position lost due to the infraction. [clarity]

17.H. Changed "multiple infractions" to "multiple calls", to include calls such as "stall" which are not infractions. [clarity]

Travels

18.C.1.b.1. Clarified the procedure for restarting play after a travel on a throw, where the thrower threw from within the end zone or out-of-bounds. The disc is checked in, making it live, then the thrower walks to the correct pivot spot and puts the disc into play (stall may resume). [clarity]

Fouls

20.B. Clarified that contact is generally required for a dangerous play. Clarified conditions for exception permitting a dangerous play call with no contact. Clarified that annotation examples do not define what is or is not a dangerous play. [clarity] [safety]

20.E.1.h. Clarified when throwing protections begin for a player that has just caught the disc. [clarity]

Mixed Rules and Adaptations Appendix

Added an appendix to include many rules that pertain only to Mixed divisions: personnel ratio rules, gender match signaling, pull rules, and player substitution. [reorg] [clarity]

Misconduct System

Renamed Team Misconduct Foul (TMF) to blue card. [clarity]

Renamed Personal Misconduct Foul (PMF) to yellow card. [clarity]

Renamed Ejection to red card. [clarity]

Clarified behavior warranting Misconduct Fouls. [clarity]

Two blue cards are assessed against a team whenever one of its members receives a red card; this was previously one blue card. [safety]

Hand Signals

Added a hand signal for violation: Arms straight, upward at a 45 degree angle, hands open, forming a “V” with your arms. [clarity]

Youth Rules and Adaptations

Updated recommendations for time between points and in-point substitutions. [safety]