

Dodgeball San Diego: Rules of Play *(last updated: 11/17/2025)*

Thank you to our friends at WeHo Dodgeball for creating a fantastic set of rules from which these are derived.

Before we get into the detailed rules there is one critical piece of information you need to know: **Dodgeball San Diego has a zero-tolerance policy for abusive behavior.** Our core goal is fostering a supportive and welcoming environment for everyone — regardless of their skill or background. To that end you are expected to abide by our [Player Code of Conduct](#) at all times at any Dodgeball San Diego sanctioned event.

Failure to abide by our rules and Code of Conduct may result in suspension or expulsion from this league. **Dodgeball runs on the honor system: if you think you got hit, know you got hit, or see a teammate get hit — take the out.** It is your responsibility to be aware of the rules and take your outs, **a referee not calling you out does not negate a ball hitting you.**

League management reserves the right to make decisions in the spirit of fairness, even if a strict interpretation of the rules indicates a different ruling. All referee calls are final.

Changes

- 11/17/2025
 - Headshots are valid. Players hit in the face are out when the ball that hit them dies.
 - Finger blocking is no longer allowed and results in an out.

Equipment

We play with 7” WDBF foam balls — otherwise known as the regulation foam dodgeballs. These are not the classic rubber balls you played with growing up, but they can still pack a punch. It is recommended that you play in form-fitting, breathable clothing that you can move around in, but you’re welcome to express yourself however you like. Be aware that clothing and hair are an extension of your body — if they get hit, you’re out.

While participating on the court you are required to have closed-toe athletic shoes with a non-marking rubber sole. Playing in any other type of shoes (boots, heels, flip flops, sandals, etc) is not allowed at any time.

Sports goggles, athletic tape (sticky side down), mouth guards, and knee pads are allowed if you wish to use them. Knee pads must not have a hard plastic shell or be made of any other material that would adversely affect gym flooring. You may also use regular or liquid chalk to improve grip so long as it has completely dried and does not excessively transfer to the balls. The use of gloves that are not medically-necessary is not allowed.

Teams

Teams may have a roster of up to 12 players but only 8 players will ever be on the court at one time. If more than 8 players are present for a match it is the captain's responsibility to coordinate rotations and ensure everyone has a fair chance at playing.

There is no on-court gender requirement but, barring injury, players may not sit out consecutive games.

Captains

A team must designate one player as the captain (usually the person who creates the team during season registration). If the normal captain is not present another player should act in their place.

Captains are the only persons that should be communicating with referees during a match. If you have questions about the rules or why a call was made please talk to your captain first and then the referee after the match has concluded.

Matches & Scoring: Regular Season

A standard Dodgeball San Diego match is 20-minutes, in which multiple games can be played between two teams. A game ends when one team has completely eliminated all opposing players from play. Each game won will be scored as one point and the team with the most points at the end of the match is declared the winner. No new games will be started if less than 30 seconds remain on the clock *when the last player is eliminated*.

If match time expires in the middle of a game a two-minute no-block period will commence. The referee will stop the game and reset players to the back wall to begin no blocking. Balls that are actively in-play when the referee stops the game remain live until they become dead. During no blocking, *any active ball that hits a defensive ball under a player's*

control is immediately dead and that player is eliminated. A deflected catch off a blocked ball is not a valid catch.

At the end of the two minutes of no-blocking if no team is fully eliminated the team with more players will be awarded the point. In the event that both teams have an equal number of players on the court the game is void and no point is awarded. In the event that a team is eliminated before no-blocking concludes, no new game will begin.

Matches & Scoring: Finals

During finals games will be played for 20 minutes. **If 30 seconds or less remain on the match clock when the last player on a team is eliminated and the game is not tied, the match is declared over.** If a game is in-progress at the end of 20 minutes: referees will stop the game; and, reset all live players to the back line; and, reset the balls so that each team has three. The match will then transition into a two minute period of no-blocking. There will only be one game played during this time.

During no-blocking if a team is eliminated, and the score is not tied, the match is over. If no team is eliminated at the end of two minutes referees will stop the game. The team with a higher number of remaining players is awarded the point. If both teams have equal number of players, the winner will be determined by sudden-death between the remaining players. Players will line up along the back line with each team receiving three balls. The first team to eliminate any opposing team player will be declared the winner of the no-block game.

If the match score remains tied at the end of no-blocking the winner will be determined by a 3-vs-3 no-blocking sudden-death using players of the captain's choosing. During sudden-death, players will line up along the back line and each player will start with a ball in hand. The first team to eliminate any opposing team player will be declared the winner.

Start of Game

A standard match is played with six balls. All six balls are placed along the court's center line — three on each side. At the start of each game players must line up with one foot against the back wall on their side of the court. Players must maintain contact with the wall until the referee starts the game.

On the referee's signal players may run to retrieve any of the balls within their initial control (the three balls on their right). During this opening rush players may step over the center line. Running for balls before the referees signal is a false start and may result in the offending team losing ball control and/or the infringing player(s) being declared out.

All balls must clear the attack lines before they can be brought into play — either by tossing it back to a player with both feet behind the line, or by crossing the attack line with both feet yourself. Any ball thrown without clearing the attack line is immediately dead; it cannot get players out and cannot be caught.

Teams have 10 seconds to retrieve balls on the opening rush before they become fair game for the opposing team to acquire and activate.

How to Win

A team is declared the winner of a game when all of the other players have been eliminated from play. When a player has been eliminated from play they are said to be out.

You can be eliminated by an opponent if they throw a ball and it makes contact with you (or your clothing/hair) without being caught, or if they catch a ball you throw offensively. You may also be eliminated if you violate the rules of the game such as touching the opposing team's court; or, jumping or dodging out-of-bounds; or, demonstrating poor sportsmanship.

Catches

When a player catches a live ball thrown by an opposing player, they are not only eliminating the player who threw the ball, they are also allowing the first person waiting in their own team's out line to re-enter the game.

A catch is only valid if both of the catching player's feet are within bounds and they clearly demonstrate control of the ball before releasing it. If a player has a ball in their hands and catches another ball they must maintain possession of *both* balls.

Deflections & Blocking

A player may use their ball to block oncoming balls thrown at them by the opposing team. Players must maintain possession of their ball immediately after deflecting a live ball. If a

player drops a ball used for deflection due to impact from the opposing ball that player is out.

A ball that is deflected remains live and can still eliminate other team members (or the blocking player) on contact, or can be caught to eliminate the person that threw the ball.

Throwing

Balls must not be kicked, spiked, or punched across the court. Any ball returned across the court in this manner is immediately dead.

Live & Dead Balls

A thrown ball is live once it leaves a player's hand and crosses the center line. A live ball can eliminate other players by contacting them, or be caught, until it becomes a dead ball.

A ball becomes dead by: contacting any part of the court, equipment, or building; or, contacting another ball in the air; or, hitting an eliminated or non-player; or, directly impacting an opposing player's head; or, being caught by an opposing player; or, returning across the center line from impacting the opposing team.

A trap — a live ball that simultaneously hits a live player and the floor (or wall) — is an out.

Pinching

A ball must not be held in a way that would damage it or alter its normal flight pattern when thrown. If a player persistently violates this rule they will receive a yellow card at the referee's discretion.

Headshots

Headshots are valid. A player that is hit in the head is out unless that ball is caught. Deliberately throwing at a person's face (headhunting) is not allowed and players doing so may receive penalty cards and/or be removed from play at the referees discretion.

Burden & Countdown

Burden is given to the team that: is in possession of the majority of the balls in play; or, is in possession of exactly half the balls and has more players; or, if both teams have equal active players, has not thrown last; or, if neither team has thrown, that last won a game.

The team with the burden has 10 seconds to make an attempt. This time resets if any ball is thrown, including by the team without burden. Referees will start an audible countdown if a ball has not been thrown within 5 seconds of being burdened. If a ball has not been thrown within 10 seconds of having the burden: play is stopped; and, the offending team must forfeit all balls in their possession; and, both teams line up at the back line with the referee restarting play.

Out-of-Bounds

Live players must stay within the boundaries of their side of the court. A player may only exit the court in order to retrieve balls that have bounded or rolled out-of-bounds. When exiting the court a player must use the open exit spaces designated on both sides of the rear of their court (the space within 2 feet of the back wall).

Players may not exit their court if there is no ball out-of-bounds and may not exit the court until a ball passes the out-of-bounds line (so don't exit in anticipation of a ball going out). Once out-of-bounds a player has 10 seconds to retrieve a ball and return to the court. Failure to return within 10 seconds results in the player being out.

Players must not exit the court with any balls in hand. Carrying a ball out-of-bounds results in the player being out. Players in the out-of-bounds zone may not reach into the court for any reason. Any player that does so will forfeit that ball to the opposing team. Players that have legally gone out-of-bounds are safe and cannot be eliminated until they step back on the court with two feet.

The last live player on a team cannot exit the court for any reason.

Dodging & Catching Out-of-Bounds

If a player moves out-of-bounds to avoid being hit that player is out. Players that step or fall out-of-bounds while catching an opponent's ball are out. Whether the catch is valid depends on when the defending player successfully takes control of the ball. If they take control of the ball while both feet are still within the boundaries of the court the catch is

valid. If a player's foot is on or outside of the court boundaries before they take control of the ball they are immediately out and the catch is invalid.

Centerline

Players may reach across the centerline in order to retrieve a ball but must not make contact with the opposing team's court.

The centerline extends across the length of the entire gym. While a player may reach across where the centerline would be in the out-of-bounds zone, they must not cross it. For safety reasons jumping across the line in an attempt to hit the opposing team before you hit the ground is not allowed.

The Out Line

Once a player is eliminated they must immediately proceed to their team's out line. The first person standing in the out line is the first person eligible for re-entry upon a catch.

When a player is eliminated they can in no way interfere with the ongoing game. This means no swatting oncoming balls or kicking/passing balls to fellow team members as they exit the court. If a player has a ball in their hand and is eliminated they must immediately drop it. Other than shagging balls, players in the out line must not interfere with the game in any way.

Players must line up in the order that they are eliminated. Line jumping may result in forfeiture of the ongoing game. Players must be standing in the out line with both feet in order to come back into a game — a player that is still exiting the court is not eligible to be caught back in, so hurry off.

A player has five seconds from the time their team makes a valid catch to come back into the game. If the player does not enter the court in time they will be deemed out and must move to the back of the line. A player becomes active upon re-entry as soon as they step in-bounds with both feet.

Regular Season: players that do not start a game are eligible to be caught in and must line up at the start of a game.

Finals: players that do not start a game are **not** eligible to be caught in and must remain out until the next game begins.

Shagging

Eliminated and alternate players may shag balls for their teams while in the out-of-bounds zone. This means they can retrieve any ball on their side of the court in the out-of-bounds zone and make them available to live players on their team.

Shaggers may not reach in bounds for any reason or roll or throw balls into the opposing court. Players may shag balls only while standing on their own side of the court and must not reach for a ball on the opposing team's side of the out-of-bounds zone.

Stalling

Teams must deliver balls to the opposing side in a manner such that the opposing team has an opportunity to take possession of the balls. Throwing balls consistently and deliberately out-of-bounds, at the ceiling, or in such a way so that they bounce over an opponent's head is considered stalling. If a referee concludes that a team is stalling they will receive a verbal warning. A team that continues to stall will relinquish all balls to the opposing team.

Active throws must be made. Giving up balls to the opponent when pressed for time is acceptable, but intentionally avoiding throwing at the opponent will result in a warning for the offending player and may result in a yellow card.

Injuries

Players who are injured during the course of play may remove themselves from play for up to two minutes (at the referee's discretion) in order to compose themselves and make sure they are still able to physically continue. If the player's team is eliminated while they are still off court the game is declared officially over.

If the player is unable to continue, the first person of the same gender identity in the outline will be allowed to take their place. If there is not a player of the same gender identity in the out line, then the next person in line may take their place. If the injured player is the last remaining player on their side the opposing team will be declared the winner.

Time Outs

There are no time outs unless called by the referee for game management purposes.

Referees

Referees are here to ensure the integrity of the game. A referee's main priority is keeping the game moving and ruling on unclear plays. It is not a referee's job to police you. You are expected to follow all rules whether a referee sees you or not.

All referee calls are final. Captains may calmly discuss a play with a referee but no players are allowed to argue or berate the referees. Any undue behavior towards a referee will result in penalty cards.

Penalty Cards

Players who persistently refuse to abide by these rules will face discipline at the referee's or league management's discretion. Discipline may begin with a verbal warning and escalate to a player being issued a penalty card.

Yellow Cards

A player who is issued a yellow card is automatically declared out if they are a live player, and will be forced to sit out the remainder of the current game and the following game. If a player receives a yellow card in the final game of a match they will be required to sit out the first game of their next match (that day, or the next week). Players that receive two yellow cards in the course of one match are automatically red carded.

Red Cards

A player who is issued a red card will be asked to leave the venue for the remainder of the night. They may additionally be subject to suspension or expulsion from the league at the discretion of league management and the advisory committee.

Players expelled from the league are not eligible for refunds of any kind.

Substitute & Replacement Players

In the event that a player cannot attend a match the team may substitute them for the evening. All subs must first sign the waiver and pay the \$10 fee to be eligible for the night.

Teams may not bring subs in order to stack a team. Rostered players take priority and should not sit a game out in order to make room for substitute players.

Substitute players are responsible for knowing these rules; and, cannot be rostered players from other teams; and, cannot play for more than one team per night; and, cannot play in the end-of-season tournament unless they have subbed for any team at least twice during the regular season.

Games played with an ineligible player are subject to forfeit. Forfeits may be applied retroactively.

Standings

Standings are automatically determined and adjusted by TeamLinkt throughout the season based on the total number of wins/losses/ties. Each match that a team wins results in three points, and a tie results in one point.

End of Match

At the end of the match referees will initiate a ten second countdown. At the end of the countdown all balls are considered dead and the match is over.