

the untitled tournament: rules *(updated 10/18/2025)*

Shout out to our friends at WeHo Dodgeball and Mile High Shootout for providing a solid base set of rules. If you've played at Sin City or Mile High Shootout you'll be familiar with almost everything here. There are modifications to accommodate our use of six foam balls.

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 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.

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

Games are played 7 vs. 7 and teams may have up to 10 rostered players. Teams may substitute players at the beginning of each game. Extra rostered players not actively playing in a game may shag balls but must not interfere with the game in any way. **A player that does not start a game on the court may not rotate in until the start of the next game.**

Teams must: have at least two players that do not self-identify as cis-male; and, have less than half of the rostered players self-identify as a straight cis-male; and, have no more than three current USAD practice squad or team members. We define “current” as any current member of the USAD practice squad or any member of the 2025 USA Dodgeball world's teams.

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. **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: Round Robin

All matches are 10 minutes long (with an additional 2 minute no-block period at the end) and teams will play as many games as possible in the course of a match. Teams will switch sides between each game. Initial burden is given to the “home” team.

After 10 minutes, any *in-progress game* will pause and transition into a 2 minute no-block period. Only the players currently active on the court at the end of 10 minutes will play in the no blocking period. Balls will be reset so that each team starts with 3 balls in-hand on the back-line. No *new* games will begin during the no block period.

Each game won by a team is scored as one point. Points are accumulated across all round-robin games that a team plays and determine the seeding for playoff matches. In the event that two teams are tied the higher seed will be determined by head-to-head match results, then by win differential.

Matches & Scoring: Playoffs and Finals

Teams will play a best-of-three match during play-offs, and best-of-five during semi-finals and finals. Teams will switch sides between each game. The higher seed will pick a side or initial burden.

A no-blocking rule will go into effect after 8 minutes for playoffs, and 12 minutes for semi-finals and finals.

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 (no more than 5 feet from the court edge). At the start of a game players must be lined up along the rear line on their side of the court with one foot on the line and one foot on the court. Players must maintain contact with the line until the referee's starting signal.

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 referee's signal is a false start and will first result in a warning, with subsequent violations by the same-team resulting in the infringing player(s) receiving a yellow card.

All balls must clear the attack lines before they can be brought into play. 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. A point is only awarded to a team when all players on the opposing team have been eliminated.

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. Catching a ball that simultaneously makes contact with the floor of part of the building (a "trap") results in a dead ball and both players are considered safe.

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. Balls may not be placed on the opposing team's side. Balls may be rolled across the center line, but must generally roll towards an opposing player (see: stalling).

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, being caught by an opposing player; or, returning across the center line from impacting the opposing team.

No Blocking Periods

Referees will stop the game and reset players to the back line to begin any no blocking period. Balls that are in-flight when the referee stops the game remain live until they become dead. Each team will then begin the no block period with 3 balls in-hand and with one foot on the back line.

During no blocking, any active ball that hits a defensive ball under a player's control is immediately dead and the defensive player is eliminated. A deflected catch off a blocked ball is not a valid catch.

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 & Headhunting

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; or, is in possession of exactly half the balls and has more players; or, if both teams have equal

active players, did not throw last; or, if neither team has thrown, that last won a game. Initial burden at the start of a match always goes to the home team.

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

Lines are lava — any player that steps on or over the center, back, or side lines is immediately out. Each match will have designated ball shaggers provided; therefore **players may not exit the court in order to retrieve a ball**. Any player that exits the court is immediately out, including players that exit in anticipation of being out. Once you have stepped off the court you may not re-enter until caught back in.

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.

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.

A player must have at least one point of contact with the court and no points of contact out-of-bounds when taking control of a catch for it to be valid. If a player makes contact 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.

Jumping across the center 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. Players that do not start a game are not eligible to be caught in and must remain out until the next game begins.

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.

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. Teams may grab and hold balls outside the court, but once a team has ball control the countdown starts. Whenever possible, balls that entered another court and were tossed back to the “wrong” team should be passed to the “correct” team.

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.

When a team is scheduled to referee a game they must provide four players: two center-line referees and at least two ball shaggers.

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. 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 tournament. 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 tournament are not eligible for refunds of any kind.

Substitute & Replacement Players

Only rostered players may participate in games for a team. Games played with an ineligible player are subject to forfeit. Forfeits may be applied retroactively.

End of Match

At the end of the match referees will initiate a ten second countdown. At the end of the countdown all balls (including those actively in-flight) are immediately dead and the match is over.

These rules have been adapted for this tournament from our friends at WeHo Dodgeball.