

OFFICIAL ABC LEAGUE RULES

SECTION A - GENERAL RULES

A-1. The final interpretation of American Bocce rules will be decided by Andy Zimmerman, Alex Gara, and the official Rules Committee.

A-2. If interpretations are not currently covered, a submission for an addendum, clarity, or a challenge can be made to Alex Gara, Andy Zimmerman, and the official Rules Committee.

A-3. As of Feb 1, 2026 an official Rules Committee has been formed. The current members of the Rules Committee are Kevin Keating, Jeff Giegold, and Rob Schroeder.

A-4. A game is played between two teams of one, two, or four. Most ABC leagues games are four-on-four. A team of four will split into pairs at either end of the court. A team of two stays together and will walk from one end to the other throughout the game. If you're playing one-on-one, then you just keep walking from one end to the other with your opponent.

A-5. Each team plays with four bocce balls that are differentiated by color. The goal of the game is to get your team's bocce balls closer to the pallino, the smaller target ball, than the other team's bocce balls.

A-6. Each frame is played from one side of the court and begins with the pallino being thrown into the field of play.

A-7. Every throw (including the pallino) must meet the following criteria to remain on the court:

a. Player's feet must be behind the boundary line. When using a Packaworld Packabocce court, players stand outside of "the box" and the boundary line is simply the wall closest to them. When using other courts, the boundary line will be displayed on the court. In some cases, the player's will stand in "the box" and must keep one foot against the back wall. Players can move outside the sidewalls to get their desired angle, but cannot break the plane of the back wall. A player is allowed to step into a throw as long as the ball is released before the foot crossing the boundary hits the ground / surface.

b. Ball must be thrown underhand and reach the half court line.

c. Ball cannot touch the back wall unless it makes contact with a ball in play first.

A-8. Sequence of Play - The team that is closest to the pallino is "in" and the other team is "out". The team that is "out" throws until they are "in" or out of bocce balls. Both teams must throw all of their bocce balls to complete a frame.

A-9. To become a team that is “in” you must throw a ball closer to the pallino than the existing closest ball. A tie in distance does not count as an “in” ball.

A-10. It is legal for a thrown to ball to hit a side wall, an existing ball in play, and the pallino. If the pallino is struck, you are essentially just moving the target.

A-11. Points are scored after all balls have been thrown. The team with the closest ball to the pallino is the only team scoring in that frame. The scoring team receives one point for each of their balls closer to the pallino than the other team’s closest ball. Up to four points are awarded to the scoring team in one frame.

A-12. If at the end of a frame, both team’s closest balls are equidistant from the pallino, then the next closest ball breaks the tie. In this event, only one scoring point is allowed during the frame.

SECTION B - COURTS & EQUIPMENT

B-1. A standard American Bocce-approved court is a Packaworld Packabocce Recreational Court. American Bocce also approves permanent structures such as treated timber, railroad ties, rubber, and PVC walls.

B-2. The preferred surface is high-grade competition astro-turf. American Bocce also approves artificial grass, stone-dust, dirt, clay, grass or a similar artificial surface provided there are no permanent or temporary obstructions in the court that would interfere with the straight line delivery of a ball from any direction. These obstructions do not include variations in grade or consistency or terrain.

B-3. American Bocce reserves the right to not recognize a court / surface as ABC-approved if the court or surface provides the following one or more of the following impediments:

- a. The court’s size is too small that it impacts the integrity of the game
- b. The court’s surface is too uneven or impractical that it impacts the integrity of the game
- c. The court is deemed unsafe
- d. The court’s composition is too inconsistent
- e. The size of the court or the size of the court plus the difficulty of the surface provide game conditions that are not conducive to an inclusive environment.

B-3. Bocce Balls may be composed of resin, stone composite, metal, or plastic. Official league and tournament size is 107mm, 920g. The color of the balls is immaterial provided that the four balls of one team are clearly visibly distinct from the bocce balls of the opposing team.

B-4. The pallino must not be larger than 63 mm (2.5”) or smaller than 40mm (1.65”) and should be of a color visibly distinct from both bocce ball colors.

B-5. A measuring device may be any device that has the capacity to accurately measure the distance between two objects.

SECTION C - THE GAME

C-1. Regular season games start with a roll-off. A roll-off is akin to a lag in billiards, and is composed of 2-4 players participating in a quick competition wherein the winner is awarded the toss of the pallino and the choice of ball color.

C-2. During most playoff games, the pallino, choice of ball color, and choice of starting side will automatically be awarded by the team with the higher seeding.

C-3. If the lead player tosses the pallino illegally (either short of the center line, off the back wall, or out of play) then the other team receives possession of the pallino and first toss. If each team tosses the pallino illegally, the referee then tosses the pallino and the original team retains possession for the first ball.

C-4. After each frame, the team that scores controls the pallino and first toss to begin the next frame.

C-6. During a frame, each team member must throw two balls. The order of the team members' throws within their team does not matter, so long as it's in compliance with the sequence of play outlined in Rule A-8.

C-5. League games are played to 12 points or to time, generally 25 minutes. Timer begins when the first pallino comes to rest after the first toss has put it into play. If a game has not been completed after 20 minutes, the referee will enforce a "down-and-back" rule. This means that after two additional full frames, the game will end, and the team with the higher score is the winner. If after those two frames the score is tied, one additional frame will be played to determine the winner. A referee may allow for "extra time" if a game has been slowed down or impeded by outside circumstances. The "extra time" should not be excessive and is at the full discretion of the referee.

C-6. The Golden Rule - During most leagues, players must have a beverage in their non-throwing hand to complete a legal toss (of both the pallino and a bocce ball). This can be any legal beverage (beer, cup of water, soda, wine, etc.). If the player throws without "drink in hand" and the referee observes or is notified in a timely manner, that ball will be pulled immediately. Once a new ball has been tossed, the golden rule cannot be enforced. A referee has discretion whether or not to tip a player off before they toss without a drink, but this should be limited to "rookie" players or more casual events and leagues.

C-7. Hot Shots - Hot Shots are warm shots of alcohol that are given as punishment to players who throw egregiously bad shots. They were born of tradition within our community and are intended to enhance a player's experience and never impede upon it. In select leagues referees will give out hot

shots, but only to willing players. In addition to bad shots, referees reserve the right to give out Hot Shots for players becoming argumentative, being late, or even occasionally as the result of a bet. All players have the right to refuse the shot.

SECTION D - COMPLEX RULES

D-1. If the pallino is knocked out of bounds during a frame, the entire frame resets. The same players replay the frame and the team who had possession of the pallino to start the frame retains it.

D-2. If an already-established pallino is knocked back short of the halfway point during a frame, the frame will continue. All balls must still reach at least the halfway point, and the frame is still scored by distance between balls and pallino.

D-3. When Packaworld Packabocce courts are being used, players are allowed to request a foot on the wall to more-thoroughly secure the side walls. The foot must be placed by a referee or approved American Bocce member. The foot should not move during the throw. It is simply there as a reinforcement for the walls. A foot on the back wall is not allowed.

D-4. If gaps appear between the walls and the surface during play, a referee is encouraged to continue to "reset" the walls. The walls should be gently kicked or nudged in between shots, but not during them.

D-5. In accordance to Rule A-7-b a ball must establish itself on or past the halfway point to be deemed legal. In order to establish itself, it must not only reach that point, but it must also come to a stop at least directly over the center point. In many cases, that point is designated by a seam in the turf. If a ball rests in the seam, it is legal. If it rests short of the seam (even if some of the ball appears over the seam or a live ball on or near the seam prevents it from crossing the halfway point) it is a dead ball and should be pulled from the court.

D-6. In the event that ball are disrupted during a frame (i.e. a player/ref prematurely starts to gather balls or a ball hits the back wall and then hits the ball in play before a referee has a chance to pull the ball) then the arrangement of the balls should be reset to the closest interpretation of where the balls were arranged before the disruption.

D-7. In the event that a pallino moves while it is being measured (i.e. pallino is positioned on an uneven surface below the court) such that it is unclear who held the point originally then the pallino shall be moved to its original place as accurately as possible

D-8. In the event a pallino that was resting on a wall is struck and falls between the turf and the wall then the pallino and wall should be pushed back to be even with the turf. This may change who is close to the pallino.

SECTION E - VIOLATIONS, PENALTIES, AND INCOMPLETE TEAMS

E-1. Substitute rules differ from league to league. In any league, a team can play with three players so long as the player throwing by themselves is penalized one ball per frame. In the event that a player is running late, a team can start with three players and the penalty and once the fourth player arrives, they are allowed to insert themselves into the game during the next frame. At that point, the one ball penalty is no longer enforced.

E-2. The penalty for playing down two players will differ from league to league and is up to the league manager of that league. In many leagues, being down two players will result in the two walking side-to-side and changing hands as they change sides.

E-3. A standard forfeit will result in a 6-0 loss and thus be reflected in the standings. In the event of a forfeit, the team present will roll a mini-game to earn more points. A pallino will be placed approximately in the middle of the back section. Each player will have one opportunity from each side to roll a ball within 15" of the pallino. Each point within 15" will earn an additional point. 8 chances (2 per player) to earn 6pts. 12pts max.

E-4 Teams are allowed to request make-up games and/or scheduling accommodations in advance. League Managers are required to accommodate reasonable requests if given enough notice. If a team "no-call, no-shows" or does not allow enough lead time for an absence, their games will typically result in a forfeit. In rare cases, a League Manager reserves the right to reschedule those games, but only with permission from the team that they were intended to play.

E-5. Any ball that hits the back wall without striking a ball in play (pallino included) first, is considered a dead ball and should be pulled from the court. Any ball that does not reach the halfway point (see D-5 for more specific explanation) is considered a dead ball and should be pulled from the court. In the event that a team's first ball thrown violates either of these terms, that team must throw, and continue to throw until they establish a ball that is "in".

E-6. Throwing a ball out of turn results in a dead ball. Referees, teammates and opposing teams are permitted to try and stop the player from throwing out of turn, but if the infraction goes unnoticed prior to the throw, then the ball should be pulled from the court.

E-7. Players are expected to play their games with a timely and deliberate pace-of-play. In the event that a player is playing excessively slow, a referee reserves the right to "put them on the clock". (note: this should only occur after two verbal warnings). If a player is "put on the clock" they will have 25seconds to throw their ball for each throw until the end of the game.

E-8. In the event that a player is running late, that player will have five minutes from the scheduled start time to arrive before the game must begin. The five

minute buffer cannot start before the scheduled game time. If the player still hasn't arrived after five minutes, the game will begin in accordance to Rule E-1.

E-9. In the event an entire team arrives late, they will incur a 2pt penalty for every 5m late, beginning after a 5m grace period. The clock will begin minus minutes late, in increments of 5.

E-10. The following are considered Level 1 violations and subjected to verbal warnings until the violation is deemed a repeat-offense.

- a. Foot Faults
- b. Prematurely gathering or kicking balls
- c. Obstructing view of balls left to be played
- d. Passing halfway point to interact with teammates

E-11. The following are considered Level 2 violations and subjected to the forfeiture of balls:

- a. Repeat Offenders of Level 1 Violations
- b. Direct disruption of balls in play, referees, or players throwing
- c. Verbal abuse and/or taunting towards other players or referees

E-12. The following are considered Level 3 violations and subjected to forfeiture of games, suspension, and banishment:

- a. Discriminatory language or behavior based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, or any other legally protected basis
- b. Physical altercation with any referee, player, employee, or customer of establishment
- c. Brandishing of weapons or threatened physical violence