

2026 VPA FIELD HOCKEY GUIDE

SEASON INFORMATION

2026	Field Hockey
OOS No Contact Week:	August 1
1st date for practice	August 13, 2026
1st date to play	August 28, 2026
Last date to play	October 17, 2026
Last Day to Enter Games	October 18, 2026
Pairings Posted	October 18, 2026
Playdowns	October 20 & 21, 2026
Quarterfinals	October 23 & 24, 2026
Semi-Finals	October 27 & 28, 2026
Finals	Oct 30, 31st D1 Friday

NFHS Rules Changes for 2026:

Practice Guidelines

- **Double Practice Rules:**
 - Maximum total practice time: 5 hours per day (max 3 hours for one practice, 2 hours for other)
 - Minimum 3-hour rest period between practices
 - No consecutive days of double practices
 - During rest periods: no active training (classroom meetings permitted)

Game & Scrimmage Requirements

- **Preseason Scrimmages:** Permitted anytime with no minimum practice requirement
- **Before First Game:** 10 practices required
- **Maximum Regular Season Games:** 14 games (excluding playoffs)
- **Scrimmage Limit:** Maximum 3 scrimmages from first practice until tournament pairings
 - Additional scrimmages permitted during tournament play

Team Conduct Policy

If a varsity team receives three ejections/disqualifications (athletes or coaches) during the season:

- Coach, Athletic Director, and/or Principal must meet with the Activities Standards Committee
- Meeting required regardless of team standing
- Purpose: Discuss incidents and remediation steps
- Failure to meet with ASC results in tournament ineligibility

Officials' Fees (2026 Season)

- **Varsity:** \$97.50 per game
- **Sub-Varsity:** \$75 per game

Eighth Grade Participation

- Permitted at lowest level offered if needed to field a team
- Request must be submitted to VPA for approval
- 8th graders cannot move to varsity level for playoffs if a JV program is offered.

GAME RULES

National Federation Rules apply. Note rule changes on the inside cover of the rulebook.

2027- Possible requirement of facemasks on corners.

Varsity Games

- **Format:** Four 15-minute quarters
- **Quarter Breaks:** 2-minute break between quarters (1&2, 3&4)
- **Halftime:** Maximum 10 minutes
- **Timeouts:** One 90-second timeout allowed

JV Games

- **Format:** Four 12-minute quarters (running time)
- **Quarter Breaks:** 1-minute break between quarters (1&2, 3&4)
- **Halftime:** Maximum 5 minutes
- **Timeouts:** One 90-second timeout allowed

Game Procedures

- If using warm-up clock, countdown should end at least 5 minutes before game time
- Players must be on field ready for whistle at game time and after intermissions
- **Player Limit:** No athlete may exceed six quarters of play per day

Regular Season Overtime Procedures

- One 10-minute SUDDEN VICTORY overtime period
- 5-minute intermission before overtime
- Visiting team calls coin toss (winner chooses possession or direction)
- Teams consist of 6 field players plus goalkeeper
- On penalty corners: defending team limited to 4 players behind goal line (3 field players + goalkeeper)
- Game ends when goal is scored or at end of overtime period (tie permitted)

Mercy Rule

- Applies when there is a 5-goal differential.
- Does not apply during tournament play

FIELD REQUIREMENTS

Standard Field Dimensions

- Rectangular area: 100 yards × 60 yards (see Rule 1-2-1)
- Playing surface: turf or grass (max 1.5 inches long)
- Small balding areas permitted (exceptions for dying grass)

Field Marking Requirements

- No outstanding markings from other sports on grass.
- No softball/baseball infield areas or unnatural obstacles
- Field slope should not be extreme
- Markings must follow NFHS Rulebook (particularly circle measurements)
- Portable lights not permitted for night games

Game Administration

- Coaches restricted to bench area (between substitution line and 25-yard line, at least 5 yards back from sideline)
 - Administrator or designated assistant **MUST** be present at all home games and introduced to officials
 - HOME TEAM must provide:
 - Adult timer
 - Separate designated scorekeeper
 - Scorebook (must remain at tech table until signed by officials)
 - Officials must check book at halftime with scorers/timers at midfield and sign the book
-

TOURNAMENT INFORMATION

Field Use Guidelines

- **Playdowns & Quarterfinals:** Higher-seeded team's field if suitable
- **Semifinals:** Played on neutral turf fields
- **Practice Restriction:** Teams cannot practice on semifinal/championship fields once tournament begins
- **Unsuitable Field Process:**
 - If higher-seeded team's field is unsuitable, they must find alternative by September 20
 - If no alternative found, lower-seeded team's field will be used
 - To host tournament game, grass field must be played on minimum 3 times
 - If both fields unsuitable, VPA will assign neutral field (schools share expenses)

Tournament Personnel

- **Officials Payment:**
 - Through quarterfinals: Home team pays officials (fee + mileage) unless neutral site used
 - Semifinal at member school: Host school pays both officials and is responsible for duties and the below personnel.
- **Semifinal Home Team Provides:**
 - Timer (experienced, reliable, non-student adult)
 - Official scorer (experienced, reliable)
 - Clock, stopwatch, and game balls (Finals, game balls provided by VPA.)

- Officials payment: Higher seed pays for the higher mileage official, and visiting team the other official.
- (Officials responsible for scorer/timer at finals)

Tournament Overtime Procedures

- **Playdowns, Quarterfinals, Semifinals:**

- Up to two 10-minute SUDDEN VICTORY overtime periods (7v7)
- 5-minute intermission between regulation and first overtime
- 2-minute intermission before second overtime (if needed)
- Teams switch ends for second overtime
- Team NOT starting with ball possession in first overtime starts with ball in second overtime

- **Finals:**

- Up to two 5-minute SUDDEN VICTORY overtime periods

- **1v1 Procedure (If Tied After Overtime):**

- 5-minute intermission before starting 1v1
- Visiting team calls coin toss (winner chooses to attack or defend)
- Officials select goal (considering lighting and proximity to game clock)
- Each team selects 5 players in set order
- Players disqualified: red-carded players or yellow-carded within last 5 minutes of 2nd overtime
- Teams alternate shots in listed order (1-5)
- First round NOT sudden victory (game ends if numerical victory impossible)
- If tied after first round: 2-minute intermission, then SUDDEN VICTORY rounds
- Teams may change shooters/order before each round
- Additional rounds continue until winner declared

1v1 Procedure Details

- Teams position behind 40-yard line
- Attacking players start from 25-yard line
- Coaches and remaining team members stay 10 yards behind 25-yard line
- Teams move toward sidelines to open space in front of goal
- Adult scorekeeper assists recording shooter order and goals
- Timer sets 10 seconds for each shooter (starts with official's whistle)
- Audible signal when 10 seconds elapse

- **NFHS Rules:**
 - Attacker foul ends procedure
 - Unintentional goalkeeper foul: procedure retaken
 - Intentional goalkeeper foul: penalty stroke awarded (any roster player may take)
- **Procedure Ends When:**
 - 10 seconds elapse
 - Goal scored
 - Ball goes out of play (end line, sideline,)

Weather & Interruptions

- If game interrupted due to darkness/weather: resume at point of interruption on next available date
- For finals: tournament director makes decisions about play in inclement weather

Additional Tournament Rules

- No spectators allowed in goal or bench areas during play
 - Officials will stop game until school authorities clear goal area if necessary
 - Schools responsible for properly lined and visible field markings
 - Awards: 28 total medals (25 eligible players, 1 manager, 1 coach, 1 assistant coach)
-

UNSUITABLE TOURNAMENT FIELDS

Grass fields with multiple lines are considered suitable if non-field hockey lines are greened out.

Schools with currently unsuitable fields (must inform VPA of changes by October 7, 2024):

- Brattleboro
- Harwood

VPA Field Hockey Committee representative will inspect fields with the Athletic Director and Varsity Coach.

If field remains unsuitable, refer to "Field Use" guidelines under Tournament Procedure section.

Divisional Alignment:

Field Hockey		
28 Schools	School	Divisional Alignment
1	Champlain Valley Union High School	1
2	Essex High School	1
3	Burlington High School	1
4	South Burlington High School	1
5	St. Johnsbury Academy	1
6	Mt. Mansfield Union High School	1
7	Rutland Senior High School	1
8	Burr & Burton Academy	1
9	Colchester High School	1
10	Rice Memorial High School	1
1	Brattleboro UHS #6	2
2	North Country Union High School	2
3	Spaulding	2
4	Hartford High School	2
5	Lyndon Institute	2
6	Middlebury Union High School	2
7	U-32	2
8	Otter Valley UHS #8	2
9	Bellows Falls	2
1	Missisquoi Valley Union Middle/High School	3
2	Milton High School	3
3	Harwood Union High School	3
4	Mt. Abraham Union High School	3
5	Montpelier High School	3
6	Woodstock Union Jr/Sr H.S. #4	3
7	Fair Haven	3
8	Windsor High School	3
9	Stowe High School	3

