Gameplay: Regular Season

- **Game Format**: Three 15-minute periods with stopped time, unless otherwise specified.
- **Timeouts**: No timeouts permitted during regular season games (timeouts allowed in playoffs only).
- **Tied Games**:
  - Games tied at the end of regulation proceed to a shootout.
  - The shootout will consist of **3 rounds**, and can be extended up to a maximum of **5 rounds**.
  - If there is no winner after 5 rounds, the game ends in a **tie**.
  - **Shootout Eligibility**: Any player serving a penalty at the conclusion of the game is **not eligible** to participate in the shootout.
- **Mercy / Running Time Rule**:
  - If a team reaches a **7-goal differential in the second period** or a **5-goal differential in the third period**, the game switches to **running time**.
  - If the goal differential falls back within the limit (below 7 in the 2nd or below 5 in the 3rd), the game reverts to **stopped time**.
- **Mercy Rule** (Note: The above replaces the previous mercy rule.)

Gameplay: Playoffs

- **Timeouts**: Each team is allowed one timeout per game, which carries over into overtime.
- **Overtime Format**:
  - 5-minute stopped-time overtime period played **5-on-5**.
  - If no goal is scored, the game proceeds to a **continuous shootout** until a winner is determined.
  - All players must shoot before the rotation of shooters can start over.
  - **Shorter Bench Rule (Oshie Rule)**: Once the team with the shorter bench has exhausted their lineup during the playoff shootout, the rules convert to the "Oshie Rule" — **any player from either team** may shoot continuously.

    - **Shootout Eligibility**: Any player serving a penalty at the conclusion of the game (including penalties such as too many men) is **not eligible** to participate in the shootout.

- **Playoff Eligibility**:
    - Players must play a **minimum of 5 games** on their rostered team to be eligible for playoffs.
    - It is the **captain's responsibility** to ensure players are marked as "playing". Captains have **48 hours** from the end of the game to notify the league if a player who participated was not correctly marked as "playing".
    - A player's **rostered position** is binding in the playoffs (e.g., a goalie who meets the 5-game minimum cannot play as a skater in the playoffs).
    - Players arriving after the end of the 2nd period will be marked as **"Sitting Out"** and do **not** count toward the 5-game eligibility requirement.

Penalties

- **Minor Penalties**: All minor penalties result in a 2-minute infraction.
- **Penalty Limits**:
    - A player accumulating 4 penalties in a single game faces ejection from the current game and a 1-game suspension to be served in the next game.
    - Second offense by the same player in a season: 3-game suspension + 1-game suspension for the team captain.
    - Third offense: Suspension for the remainder of the season with no refund of league fees.
- **Fighting Penalties**:
    - First offense: Automatic ejection + 1-game suspension.
    - Second offense: 5-game suspension for the player (captain may also face 1-game suspension). No refund.
    - Third offense: Suspension for the remainder of the season with no refund.
- **Suspension Serving Rule**:
    - **All suspensions must be served with the team you were suspended for** prior to being eligible to play for any other team in the entire league.

- **Example 1**: Any player getting suspended in a C-League game on Monday/Thursday nights would be ineligible to play in a D-League game on Sunday and would need to serve their C-League suspension first prior to playing in any other SJAHL team.
- **Example 2**: You are a C-League player and sub for a D-Team. If there is an off week (bye week) for the D-League the following week, you are still suspended for your primary C-League team until the D-League suspension has been fully served. You must wait until the next D-League game to serve the suspension. This means the suspension could last up to 2½ weeks due to the bye week.

- **Unserved Suspensions**: Result in a 3-game suspension for the player and a 1-game suspension for the captain.
- **Commissioner's Authority**: Suspensions may be assessed post-game. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 48 hours.

Rosters & Player Rules

- **Player Registration**:
  - All players must have a valid **2026-27 USA Hockey Registration Number** prior to participating.
  - If a player does not have the up-to-date 2026-27 number, they must obtain it during the initial check-in to be eligible to play in the first game.
- **Roster Limits**: There is **no maximum roster limit**. However, players must physically check in with the scorekeeper prior to puck drop for the game to count toward their 5-game playoff eligibility.
- **Ringers / Substitute Players**:
  - **No highly skilled "ringers" are allowed** in the league. League levels are established to maintain balanced talent.
  - All substitutes **must be pre-rostered**.
  - **Last-minute subs**: Only permitted in emergencies when a team is under **9 skaters** showing up **and** has exhausted their roster. Must be approved by the **opposing team captain and the commissioner**.
  - Any team caught with an **unrostered player** may result in the captain facing **up to a 3-game suspension**.

- **Jerseys**:
    - All players must wear a **proper game jersey** matching the team's **base color** as closely as possible.
    - Players that do not have a closely matching base color jersey may be removed by officials or required to change into a jersey that more appropriately matches the team color without conflicting with the opponent's color.
    - **Example**: Team A has dark grey jerseys and a player comes on the ice in a light grey jersey against a team wearing white. These colors are too close to the opponent's base color and will not be allowed.
    - If a team has an issue with a player's non-matching jersey, the referees will make the final decision.
    - Players must have their correct **2026-27 USA Hockey Registration Number** properly associated with their jersey and roster for verification.
- **Photo Requirement**: **All players** must have their picture attached to the gamesheet roster to verify identity. Rosters will be **locked** after the initial check-in week — no updates allowed during the season.
- **Check-In Procedures**:
    - A league-wide check-in with ID verification will be held during the **first week** of the season.
    - **All players** must check in with the scorekeeper prior to puck drop. Failure to do so will result in being marked **"Sitting Out"**.
    - **Captains are strongly encouraged** to bring their game rosters to each game to help ensure players are properly marked as present and "playing".

Skill Level Enforcement

- Players playing significantly **above the skill level** of the league will be asked to remove themselves for the remainder of the season from that league.
- Scorekeepers and referees will monitor and enforce this rule.
- Complaints will be investigated with video evidence. This policy will be **strictly enforced**.

Equipment

- **Full protective equipment** is required for all games, per USA Hockey standards (helmets, gloves, shin guards, elbow pads, shoulder pads, etc.).
- A **minimum of a half shield** is required on helmets.
- Failure to comply will result in the player being prohibited from participating until corrected.

Additional Guidelines

- **Code of Conduct**: Players must uphold sportsmanship and respect. Abuse toward officials, players, or spectators results in ejection and possible further discipline.
- **Injury Reporting**: Injuries must be reported immediately. Teams are responsible for ensuring players have adequate medical insurance.
- **League Communication**: All official communications go through the league commissioner. Captains are responsible for sharing information with their teams.
- **Ineligible Players in Playoffs**: Any ineligible player participating in a playoff game will result in an **automatic forfeit** for that team. No appeals will be accepted.