

2026 ACS Hockey Rules

Last updated February 2026

1. ACS Hockey matches are to be played under the junior rules of Hockey Victoria unless otherwise stated hereunder or in ACS Competition Rules.

Includes: Minimum player numbers are 8. Less numbers will result in a forfeit.

Mercy Rule: This applies for all competitions except Senior 1st

Last person drop-off: If a score reaches a difference of five (5) goals during a game, the leading team will drop-off one (1) player then if the score reaches a difference of eight (8) the team will drop-off a second player whilst ever there is a score differential of 8 goals during the game.

The maximum recorded final score differential is 7 goals based on the lower team's score e.g. 8 – 1.

- Penalty (short) Corners shall be played out for all matches. It is mandatory for Face masks/guards to be worn by the defenders for a penalty corner.
- The Tomahawk hit is permissible in all ACS games
- For all ACS competitions it is permissible to raise the stick above the shoulder.
- In Finals if scores are equal at full time, it will be determined by a penalty shoot-out (see Rule 2 below)
- For Year 7's only: Coaches are permitted to enter the centre section of the field only and towards the sideline as long as they do not impede or influence play with their presence.

Other rules to help improve player safety remain; including the introduction of mandatory rules for wearing facemasks to defend penalty corners (5 players) which have been amended to increase player safety.

2. In Finals, if scores are equal at full time: A Penalty Shoot Out Competition shall be played. A coin is tossed; the team that wins the toss has the choice to take or defend the first shoot-out.
 - 2.1. The Umpire/s will specify in advance the goal to be used.
 - 2.2. Respective Coaches/Captain should nominate five players to take and one player to defend the shoot-outs from those on the Team Sheet. A player nominated to defend the shoot-outs can also be nominated to take a shoot-out. No substitutions / replacements are permitted during the shoot-out competition other than as specified in Hockey Victoria rules. Each team will have a minimum of five penalty shoot-outs and five players from each of the two teams alternately take a penalty shot against the defending goalkeeper. The team who scores the most penalty shoot-outs from their five attempts shall; be declared the winner of the game.
 - 2.3. If after the minimum five attempts each team has scored the same number of penalty shoot-outs, a second series of penalty shoot-outs is taken. The winner being the team who scores one more goal than the other after the same number of penalty shoot-outs have been taken.
 - 2.3.1. If an equal number of goals are scored after a second series of five shoot-outs, additional series of shoot-outs are taken with the same number of players subject to the conditions specified below:
 - The sequence in which the attackers take the shoot-outs need not be the same in any subsequent series.
 - The team which starts the shoot-out series alternates for each series.

The rules of hockey apply during a shoot-out. See 'Finals Penalty Shoot-out' appendix on back of official ACS scoresheet.

- 2.4. A player who has been temporarily suspended (green or yellow card) may take part in the shoot-out competition even if the period of their suspension has not been completed at the end of the match. A player who has been excluded permanently (red card) during the match cannot take part in that shoot-out competition.
- 2.5. The team scoring the most goals (or ahead by more goals than the other team has untaken shoot-outs available) is the winner.

3. All schools must play matches on synthetic pitches.
4. Home team to provide the balls.
5. All umpires are to be supplied by the home team. For all levels 2 accredited umpires must be provided.
6. An umpire may order a player off the field for misbehaviour or rough play and the player will not be replaced during the suspension time.
7. **Duration of games:** When matches commence on time and there is no valid reason such as weather interruptions or excessive heat to reduce match times coaches and umpires shall allow all matches to play for the full duration as listed below.
 - Seniors: 35 minute halves & Interval: 5 minutes
 - Years 7 – 9: 30 minute halves & Interval: 5 minutes

*When the temperature rises above 30deg matches may be reduced to 2 x 25 minute halves with drinks break at the 12½-minute mark.
8. **Result if a match is unfinished due to weather etc:** For a result to be declared the match must have reached half time then the score as it stands when play ceased shall be taken as the final result. Should a match not reach half time then it is deemed a draw.
9. **Team Numbers:** A team may consist of unlimited players provided that only 11 players are on the field at any one time. Minimum team numbers are eight (8). Any less will result in a forfeit.
 - 9.1. **New in 2026: Exception: Hockey B competitions:** When a team(s) do not have 11 players available to take the field teams are permitted to play with 9 players a side. If a team has less than 9 players, the opposition team are not required to reduce players numbers to less than 9.

However, if teams have 11 players they shall play 11 a side.
10. Spectators should be kept back from the playing area to keep them out of the way of players and umpires.
11. Umpires are to be consistently hard on dangerous play and lifted balls including shots at goal where field defenders are involved.
 - 11.1. It is **mandatory for face masks/guards to be worn** by the defenders for a penalty corner.
12. All players must wear shin pads with long socks and use mouthguards or will not be allowed to play and is to be enforced by coaches and umpires.
13. The goalkeeper must wear suitable protective uniform, including a helmet with throat guard and for boys, a box, or will not be allowed to play. It is strongly recommended that clubs insure goalkeepers are fully kitted with correctly fitted protective equipment appropriate to the age and size of the goalkeeper including: kickers, gloves, chest guard, and for girls a pelvic protector.
14. A goalkeeper must be on the field with protective gear as noted in point 12 and 13.
15. Forfeit score will be recorded as a 7 – 0 win
16. Uniform:
 - 16.1. All players must be uniformly dressed. This includes long socks, shorts and tops.
 - 16.2. Numbers are preferred but optional.