



Dodgeball League Rulebook and General Information

Purpose and Scope of This Document

This Rulebook is intended to give all participants a broad overview of how the league operates and explain most rules and procedures that govern the league. This document is not intended to cover every last detail, such as schedules and various other procedural and administrative items. Many additional details for the league will be disseminated via e-mail and on the Club website, so please check both frequently

Code of Conduct

Madison Sports and Social Club does not tolerate discrimination, racism, sexual harassment, unwelcome sexual advances, violence, threats, or any other type of behavior that may make any player or official feel uncomfortable or threaten their health and well-being. We expect all players to treat everyone with respect and abide by common standards of decency and good sportsmanship.

Team names must not be offensive toward any race, nationality, gender identity, or any other group of individuals. They must not contain profanity. Please use tact and common sense when choosing a team name. MSSC reserves the right to reject any team name it finds offensive. You will be asked to supply a new name in the event your team name is deemed inappropriate.

Players will read and understand the rules. They are sent to all roster players prior to the season and are available on the MSSC website as well. Captains are responsible for providing the rules to any subs not listed on the roster and making sure they understand them. Not reading rules is the single biggest cause of problems in our leagues. If players have a question about the application of any given rule, they can ask an official during a break in play or after a game if time allows. They will not argue calls with officials or ask to have rules explained to them during play unless an official feels an explanation is necessary before play continues. Officials are human and make mistakes and MSSC does not tolerate abuse of its officials.

All participants must refrain from threatening, taunting, name-calling, put-downs, intimidation, violence, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior toward teammates, opponents, and officials. Everyone makes mistakes, and we will not tolerate criticism or intimidation of anyone involved with our leagues due to differences in skill level or any other factor. Coaching, tips, and helpful hints are welcome, provided they are relayed in a constructive and friendly manner. Any player making an offensive comment to another individual is subject to ejection at the umpire's discretion

All players are encouraged to report offensive behavior to the Club President, Patrick Fosdick, via e-mail at patrick@madisonssc.com. All reports will be kept anonymous and taken seriously, and appropriate action will be taken if deemed necessary, including, but not limited to warnings, suspension, and removal of the offending individual(s) from league play.

Dodgeball Registration and General Information

- Registration is only available on our website, <http://www.madisonssc.com>. All teams and Free Agents (Individuals) must be registered and paid online in order to play in the league.
- MSSC encourages Free Agents (or players without a team) to register. Full teams will be placed first, followed by Free Agents in the order they registered.
- Free Agents are welcome to form teams on their own or request to play with friends, otherwise they will be assigned to a team by MSSC.
- Full teams will be enrolled in the league before Free Agents. In the event that a league sells out for any given night, Free Agents will unfortunately not be able to participate, unless any teams are looking for additional players. It is common that some Free Agents will not be placed due to space limitations.
- Captains should rank their top three choices for t-shirt colors when registering online. In the event all three colors chosen have already been assigned, the captain will be contacted via e-mail for additional selections. Returning teams have first choice at colors and will receive a credit off their registration fee for the shirts.
- Teams will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. Many leagues sell out before the registration deadline posted on the website
- All regular players must be on a team's roster and invited to play via e-mail. All players must accept the captain's invite, as our waiver is completed and agreed to via accepting a spot on the team. Any teams in violation of roster and/or waiver policies are subject to forfeiting games at MSSC's discretion.
- Club management reserves the right to alter the structure of the league at any time before or during the season. Alterations may include, but are not limited to, rules changes, prize changes, and game format changes.
- Referees are provided by MSSC and should have no affiliation with any particular team in the league.
- Following the regular season, an appropriate playoff structure will be established. In general, all teams make the playoffs with the following exceptions:
 - Any team forfeiting two or more regular season matches may be left out of the playoffs at MSSC's discretion
 - If time or space constraints arise, teams may be left out of the playoffs to allow completion of the league in a timely and/or efficient manner and reward teams who finished with a better regular season record. This is very rare. Depending on the reason for the exclusion, a team may be refunded for a missed playoff game
 - Sometimes the bottom two teams in the standings may play one final game against each other, but this game will not be a part of the playoff bracket
 - Any team determined to have exhibited extremely poor sportsmanship or other conduct detrimental to the league on a regular and consistent basis may be left out of the playoffs at MSSC's discretion. Refunds will NOT be issued to any teams under these circumstances, as this is a violation of our Code of Conduct
 - Any team who does not wish to participate in the playoffs may be excluded at the captain's request. There is no requirement to participate in the playoffs. The captain must contact MSSC and notify us of this. Forfeit fees also apply in the playoffs

Prizes

An appropriate prize structure will be announced in the playoff email that goes out to all registered participants. In the past, prizes have included gift cards to sponsor bars, and/or “cash” prizes that can either be applied to a future season or refunded to the captain’s card used to register. MSSC reserves the right to alter the prize structure at any time for any reason.

Rules and Regulations

1. General Rules

- A. All games in the League shall be governed by the rules outlined herein.
- B. All MSSC leagues are meant to be fun and social in nature, but since play may become intense at times, please try to remember that we are here to have fun. Please refrain from any action that could be considered poor sportsmanship.
- C. Players must respect the authority of the referees to regulate the game and abide by their decisions. Refs have the authority to eject players from the game for detrimental conduct. All decisions of the referees are final. **Any situations not specifically covered in the Rulebook are up to the discretion of the refs and/or MSSC staff on site.**

2. Format

- A. Matches will last for 40 minutes of real time – not playing time. The team winning the most individual games wins the match. A short break will occur about half way through the match for teams to switch sides and grab a drink of water if they wish. Play will resume upon the referee’s indication.
- B. Matches will start promptly at the scheduled time due to tight scheduling in the evening. Teams will play shorthanded if they do not have a full team when the match is scheduled to begin. There is no grace period
- C. The clock does not stop at all during game play with the exception of a serious injury, timeout, or other situation where the referee determines it is necessary to stop the clock. It does not stop for halftime, complaining, etc.
- D. **Play operates in large part on the honor system. If you are struck by a ball at or below the shoulders, you are out unless otherwise specified in these rules, so please leave the court.** The referees will not be able to see everything, but will call outs they do see. Please show good sportsmanship and remove yourself from play if you are hit. The refs are present mostly for rule clarifications and to maintain orderly games
- E. Players must line up in the queue in the order they were out to be eligible to return to play. Players who did not start the game may be the first to enter if a player is eligible to come in due to a catch, however, they must be at the front of the queue, and the team also must keep in mind the two female rule. For example: If a female player is the first one to get out in any given game, another female must enter for her if a player is eligible to re-enter. If no other female is available to enter the game, the female who was out first must re-enter

3. Team Size, Rosters, Subs, Forfeits, etc.

- A. A full team will consist of six players on the court, at least two of whom must be female. A minimum of four players (including two females) is needed to avoid a forfeit. Teams may play with fewer than four players or fewer than two females only with the opposing team's consent.
 - If one team decides to take a forfeit win, this must be decided and captains must sign to acknowledge the forfeit before the match begins
- B. If a player leaves the match for any reason and no substitute is available, the game may proceed as long as there are still at least four players present (including two females).
- C. A player must specifically identify as a female in order to count toward the minimum number of females required to be present during play for purposes of co-ed participation. The rest of the team can be any number of males and/or non-binary individuals
- D. It is the responsibility of the team captain to communicate with the referees regarding team composition when it comes to co-ed participation rules. The captain must make the referees aware of any situations in which the identity of any given player(s) could be misconstrued
- E. Teams who no-show matches or do not show up with at least four players may be charged a forfeit fee according to the policies outlined here:
<https://madisonssc.leaguelab.com/page/forfeitfees>

4. Equipment and Uniforms

- A. All players will wear shirts provided by MSSC for every match unless an exception of some type has been granted. Teams at every level of organized sport all wear the same shirt/jersey/uniform
- B. Players are not permitted to wear gloves during play.
- C. No jewelry with sharp edges or points is allowed to be worn due to the risk of injury or damage to the balls.
- D. The league will provide six game balls. Balls are coated foam and are considered "no sting" – i.e they are not hard rubber like a kickball. There will generally be a mix of 7" and 8.25" balls due to player preferences in the size of the balls. Referees reserve the right to adjust the number of balls of any given size. Any player may throw any size ball. Balls brought by either team may be used if both teams agree, but they must be foam balls

5. Court/Facilities

- A. The playing area is a school gym (or part of a school gym). Gyms vary greatly in size, obstructions, quality of the floor, etc. In most gyms there will be an "attack line" near the back wall on each side of the court, forming a "no attack zone" in the center of the court. During the initial rush, no player in this zone will be out if hit within five seconds. There are generally no out-of-bounds areas unless the league is held in an unusually large gym. Referees have discretion in terms of the no attack zone, as it will vary by facility
- B. No balls are allowed to be thrown in hallways, common areas, or any area of the school other than the gym at any time
- C. Each team will have a designated queue on its side of the court in which players will stand when out. **Players must line up and return to play in the order they were out**

- D. Active players may leave the court to retrieve balls (i.e. a ball that rolls out a door)
- E. Players are prohibited from jumping up against or “climbing” a wall or any other object in any manner in an attempt to catch a ball. This poses a safety hazard to the player, other players, and referees

6. Officials

- A. All games will be officiated by two referees supplied by MSSC – one on each side of the court. Either referee may make a call anywhere on the court.

7. The Initial Rush

- A. All players will begin with one hand on the wall, bleacher, or door at the back of their side of the court prior to the beginning of each game. Upon the referee’s whistle, the game begins, and players may advance to bat the balls backwards. False starts will result in the initial rush being re-started. Repeated false starts may result in removal of a player from the game at the referee’s discretion.
- B. The initial rush is a free-for-all, with no limit on how many balls one team may possess.
- C. Balls must be batted or swatted backwards, not grabbed. Any player grabbing a ball before it has rolled back several feet from the line will be called out. Any players fighting over a ball will be called out.
- D. Players may not intentionally leave their feet while swatting the ball back. This includes diving or sliding in an attempt to get a ball. Players must also stay on their side of the court. A hand, shoulder, foot, etc. that crosses the line is OK, but if the majority of your body goes over the line, you will be called out. Leniency with crossing the line only applies to the initial rush. You may not touch or cross the line at any other time during the game or you are out.
- E. You may not “box out” another player to prevent them from swatting the ball. Any player doing this will be called out.
- F. Once the attack line has been crossed, a player may advance past it again and throw the ball from anywhere on their side of the court.
- G. Any player hit while in the “no attack zone” during the initial rush will not be out, unless in the zone for more than five seconds. The player throwing the ball will not be out either – it will simply be a dead ball.

8. Throwing

- A. **Balls may not be squished down or compacted in any manner before throwing.** This damages the balls and shortens their life, leading to the need to order them more frequently and raise league fees
- B. A player may not possess or throw more than one ball at a time. If a player is holding a ball and subsequently catches a thrown ball, one must be dropped as soon as possession of the thrown ball has been established. It does not matter which ball is dropped as long as clear possession of both balls has been demonstrated.
- C. Balls must hit an opposing player on the fly in order for the opponent to be out. Balls bounced off of other balls, the ground, walls, basketball hoops, other inanimate objects, or a referee will not result in the opponent being out.

- D. Hitting a player above the shoulders (a “head shot”) will result in a dead ball. Neither player will be out. A ball deflected off of a player’s hands or chest into their face is not considered a head shot, and the player will be out unless the ball is caught. A player who is judged to be ducking or otherwise maneuvering into a position in order to be intentionally hit in the head will be called out. **Referees will have wide discretion in this area, so do not try to intentionally get hit in the head or you will be called out.**
- E. There is no set time limit on how long a player may hold a ball, but refs may employ a five or ten second count at their discretion if players are holding onto balls and not throwing them in a timely manner. Setting the ball down and picking it up again will not void the count – the ball must be thrown over the center line or the player will be out.
 - a. If one side has all of the balls, there must be a clear attempt to throw the ball at an opposing player. Setting a ball down just over the center line on the opponent’s side of the court is not a throw.
 - b. If either side is hoarding balls and/or not making an attempt to throw them at opponents, referees may begin calling players out.
- F. A throw hitting multiple players before hitting the ground or a wall will result in all players that are hit being out.
- G. A player may NOT jump over the center line and land on the opponent’s side of the court while throwing a ball. Any player doing so will be out and any player(s) hit will remain in the game.

9. **Catching, Blocking, Dodging, etc.**

- A. If a player catches a ball on the fly, the player throwing the ball will be out, and a teammate of the player catching the ball may return to the field of play. If a ball bounces off a player and is caught by a teammate, the thrower is out, the player off of whom the ball bounced will not be out, and a teammate of the player catching the ball may return. This rule does not apply if a caught ball was deflected off of another ball – all deflected balls are considered dead (covered elsewhere in these rules).
 - 1. Again, players are prohibited from jumping up against or “climbing” a wall in any manner in attempt to catch a ball. This poses a danger to the player, other players, and referees
- B. A player re-entering the game after a catch by a teammate is not eligible to be hit until five seconds have passed.
- C. A player may only possess one ball at a time. If a player is holding a ball and subsequently catches a thrown ball, one ball must be dropped. If the thrown ball is not caught and/or both balls are dropped, the player will be called out. In a situation where a player catches a thrown ball and is in possession of two balls, any ten second count started by a ref will restart. Referees will have discretion to warn a player for possession of multiple balls or call the player out, depending on the situation.
- D. A player may block any thrown ball with another ball. In the case of blocking, the hand holding the ball is considered part of the ball. A thrown ball hitting the hand holding a ball will not result in a player being out. A player is hit in the wrist or forearm is out however.
- E. Thrown balls which are clearly blocked or deflected by a held ball will be dead balls, and any player hit by such a block or deflection will not be out. If no clear deflection was made, any player hit will be out.

- a. A “clear deflection” is defined as a ball that has a visible change in trajectory. Every ref will call this differently, but this is the case with any subjective rule in any sport.
- b. A thrown ball that barely grazes a held ball and hits the player is not considered a clear deflection, and the hit player will be out. Balls caught off of a deflected ball are also dead – the thrower is not out and no one may re-enter the game for the catching team.
- c. Throws that hit a player’s body and a ball held by that player at almost the same time will result in the player being out, as there will be no visible change in trajectory of the thrown ball
- F. If a player blocks a throw with a ball and drops the held ball, the player is out.
- G. If a ball is thrown, bounces off a held ball on the other side of court, and is caught by the person who originally threw it, the ball is dead and neither player is out.

10. Outs

A player who is out must drop any ball held at the time and raise a hand over their head while exiting the field of play to indicate they are out. A player will be out under any of the following circumstances:

- A. Being hit on the fly by a thrown ball defined in these rules as resulting in an out. Hitting any part of the player below the neck will count, including clothing or shoes.
- B. Holding a ball beyond any five or ten second count employed by a referee.
- C. Touching or crossing the center line while throwing.
- D. Ducking or diving into a throw to get hit in the head (referee’s discretion).
- E. Intentionally sitting down on the court while still an active player.
- F. Attempting to hide among players who are out or otherwise not participating in the game.

11. Miscellaneous Rules

- A. Teams will be awarded one sixty second timeout per match, which may only be used after completion of any given game. The clock will stop for timeouts.
- B. Players not complying with any rule, arguing with referees, or engaging in unsportsmanlike conduct may be judged ineligible to play in the game or the rest of the match by the referee. Serious offenses may result in removal from the league at MSSC’s discretion.
- C. A team will be assessed a penalty if there are more than six players on the court or if players do not re-enter the game in the order they were out. The penalty will be the removal of two players from the field of play. If two players do not immediately leave the field of play upon this penalty being called, the referee will order the two players closest to the queue to leave the court.
- D. Players may not kick a ball at any time, whether attempting to get another player out or in frustration. Any player kicking a ball may be removed from the game or the entire match at the referee’s discretion. Lightly passing a ball to a teammate with a foot is acceptable
- E. Players not actively playing must not touch or interfere with balls in any way. A team will have one active player removed from the field of play if a player who is “out” stops, traps, moves, rolls, or otherwise changes the position, trajectory or location of one of the balls. The refs will choose the player to be removed

End of the Match

At the completion of the match, each captain will sign the score card and it will be submitted to MSSC as proof of the match's final score. All players are expected to shake hands and otherwise show good sportsmanship, regardless of the final score or any disagreements or situations that may have arisen during the match.

Results and Standings

Results and standings will be posted on the Dodgeball page of the MSSC website following receipt of the official scorecard from each game.

Good Sportsmanship

The final section of the rules and regulations of the league will reiterate what was stated at the beginning of this document: The purpose of our Dodgeball league is first and foremost to have fun. Winning should always come second. All participants must realize that not all players will be on the same skill level, and that there may be vast differences in skill level between members of the same team or between two teams in the league. Boasting, bragging, taunting, verbally abusing, or otherwise putting down other players will not be tolerated. The referees and/or a representative of MSSC reserve the right to issue warnings, penalties, and ejections if any of the above-mentioned behavior becomes too severe. Winning may be important to you, but good sportsmanship must take priority over wins and losses.

Cancellation Policy

If Madison schools are closed due to inclement weather or school functions that we don't know about ahead of time, we cannot play at night. In these circumstances, all players will be e-mailed and a banner will be posted on the MSSC website announcing the cancelation. Matches will be made up at the end of the regular season.