

WNSL Basketball Rules

Please print the appropriate Sections for WNSL Special Rules and Other Items of Importance for your Grade & Division of Play

Grade	Division of Play	Sections to Print
Pre-Kindergarten	All	Sections 2 and 3
Kindergarten	All	Sections 2 and 3
Grade 1	Recreational/ Competitive	Sections 2 and 4 Sections 2 and 5
Grade 2	All	Sections 2 and 5
Grade 3	All	Sections 2 and 6
Grade 4	All	Sections 2 and 7
Grades 5 & 6	All	Sections 2 and 8
Grades 7-12	All	Sections 2 and 9



Updated 1/21/2026

Section 2--WNSL Special Rules and Other Items of Importance (All Divisions)

WNSL Responsibilities

1. The League will provide referees, a designated clock operator, and a regulation game basketball.
2. The League will oversee the operation of games. Any Special Rules contained in this document will be in effect. Anything not covered by special league rules will be in accordance with the National Federation of High Schools rules.

Team Responsibilities—All Age Groups and Divisions

1. Each team (1st grade and above) must provide one parent or other responsible adult to keep their team's scorebook at the official scorer's table. This person should keep the scorebook as if they were the only book being kept (in other words—both teams), including monitoring of playing time. The scorekeepers should compare books and with the clock operator as needed to make sure everything is correct. If there is a discrepancy that cannot be resolved, the game officials will use the Home Team book as the official book.
2. The home team is listed second on the schedule, wears light-colored jerseys, and sits to the left of the scorer's table (if facing it). Teams warm-up opposite their benches and shoot on that basket for the first half.
3. Two warm-up balls for your team, kept securely in an enclosed bag at all times other than pre-game and halftime warm-up. These balls must be brought in and secured by the coach.
4. To provide the line-up for the scorebooks immediately when warm-up begins, or at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the game, whichever is closer to the start of the game.
5. To conduct themselves (including coaches and spectators) in accordance with the Coaches Code of Conduct Agreement. Spectators will not be allowed to harass players from the opposing team or officials (see Parents Code of Conduct). Players and coaches are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times.

The Game

1. A game consists of two halves (16 minute per half for games with wristbands and 20 minutes per half for games without wristbands) with a continuous running clock stopping only on the referee's whistle for injuries, a granted time out by either team, or any other delay deemed necessary by the officials (mandatory subs for wristband divisions, problem with game equipment, etc.) until the last two minutes of each half (at which time National Federation rules for clock stoppage will apply---every whistle). Halftime shall last between 3 and 4 minutes.
2. Each team is entitled to two timeouts per half – both to be one minute in length – with un-used timeouts not carrying over to the second half. Since an overtime period is an extension of the second half, each team will get one additional timeout. Any unused second half timeouts do not carry over into overtime.
3. A team must start the game with 5 players. Game time is forfeit time (Note to Officials & Gym Monitors – be sure to use the slowest watch before ruling a forfeit). In the event that a forfeit is inevitable, coaches are asked to shift players or pick up a player of mutual agreement in order to play. Officials will work these games.
4. A team will not be recorded with more than a 20-point lead on the scoreboard at any time, although the correct score will be recorded in the scorebook.

Specific Equipment, Dimensions and other Special Rules are indicated in the appropriate section below

Section 3--Additional Rules and Information for Pre-Kindergarten Boys, Pre-Kindergarten Girls, Kindergarten Boys, Kindergarten Girls

Size of Ball: 27.5" (Junior Ball)

Height of Goal: Pre-K Boys and Girls—7.5 feet (When Available)
Kindergarten Boys and Girls—8 feet

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw—8 feet (officials will disregard if player crosses line in free throw attempt this age group only)

Designated Defensive Area: Only person-to-person defense is allowed and it must take place only within the designated defensive area listed here. The offense must enter the defensive area within normal game flow. No stalling allowed!

Pre-K and Kindergarten Boys & Girls—Inside the 3-point arc

Special Rules

1. Wristbands— Each player will wear a colored wristband. Best player/best ball handler—Red; Next best player—Orange; Third best—Yellow; 4th best—Purple; 5th best—Green. Defense is only person-to-person within the designated defensive area (above) and the defensive player must guard the opponent wearing the same color wristband. Players will line up at the beginning of each period and after substitutions in order to see what player they are guarding (same color wristband). In the event that the offense advances the ball quicker than the defense can get back (fast-break), a player with a different color wristband may play defense on any color wristband to prevent the fast-break—no penalty.
2. Substitutions—The clock will stop at the 12, 8, and 4-minute marks for substitutions. Substitutions are not allowed at other times unless a player is injured and must leave the game. Wristbands may be switched at the above marks, as well as at the start of a new period. A coach may not switch a wristband without the approval of the opposing coach. “Sand-bagging” on wristband assignments is a serious violation and will not be tolerated by the league.
3. Help Defense and Switching—Players may switch-off during normal defensive play, but must begin each time down the court matched on his/her colored wristband. In the paint, “help defense” that results in a double/triple team is allowed. One player cannot be designated as the regular “help defender” and/or camp out in the lane unless his/her defensive man is nearby. During a fast-break situation, a player down-court may guard any player or players, regardless of wristband color. No double teaming in a fast break situation though.
4. Penalty for Illegal Defense—The officials will warn a player or team for guarding outside the designated defensive area. After two warnings per half, an illegal defense violation will be called, resulting in a one-shot technical foul, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption.
5. Screens and Picks—No screens or picks are allowed, either “on” or “off” the ball.
6. Traveling and Double Dribbling—Officials are asked to be lenient if a player travels while starting or stopping his/her dribble. However, if a player gains an advantage by traveling or double dribbling, play will be stopped by the referee.
7. Fouling Out—To prevent rough play, players will foul out on their fifth foul.
8. Coach on Floor—One coach from each team may be on the floor while the clock is running to help his/her team learn to score and play defense. Coaches must stay outside the court’s 3-point line only (not near the baseline) and may not touch the ball or a player and otherwise assist in any way except verbal instructions.
9. Overtime Periods—No overtime will be played in these age divisions. A game may end in a tie.
10. Equal Playing Time—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.

****Half-time Free Throws—Each player will be allowed to shoot one free throw each at half-time, with the score counting toward the total for his/her team. Normal free throw rules apply. In the event that teams do not have the same number of players, the team with the smaller number will be allowed to designate a player (or players) to shoot a second shot to make the number of shot attempts equal. Only players who missed his/her first shot are eligible to be designated by the coach for a second attempt.***

Section 4--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 1 Boys and Girls (Recreational Division) For Grade 1 Competitive Division—see Rules for 2nd Grade

Size of Ball: 27.0” or 27.5” (Junior Ball)

Height of Goal: 8 feet

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw—10 feet (no crossing the line).

Designated Defensive Area—Front Court Area. Only person-to-person defense is allowed and it must take place only within this area. The defense must allow the offense to cross the half-court line freely. The offense in turn must cross into the defensive area within a normal time frame. No stalling allowed!

Special Rules

1. Wristbands—All players will wear a colored wristband. Best over-all player/best ball handler-Red; Next best player-Orange; Third best-Yellow; 4th best-Purple; 5th best-Green. Defense is only person-to-person within the designated defensive area (halfcourt) and the defensive player must guard the opponent wearing the same color wristband. Players will line up at beginning of each period & after substitutions to see what player they are guarding (same color wristband).
2. Substitutions—The clock will stop at the 12, 8, and 4-minute marks for substitutions. Substitutions are not allowed at other times unless a player is injured and must leave the game. Wristbands may be switched at the above marks, as well as at the start of a new period. “Sand-bagging” on wristband assignments is a serious violation and will not be tolerated by the league.
3. Help Defense and Switching—Players may switch-off during normal defensive play, but must begin each time down the court matched on his/her colored wristband. In the paint, “help defense” that results in a double/triple team is allowed. One player cannot be designated as the regular “help defender” and/or camp out in the lane unless his/her defensive man is nearby. During a fast-break situation, a player down-court may guard any player or players, regardless of wristband color. No double teaming in a fast break situation though.
4. Penalty for Illegal Defense—Officials will usually issue one warning to a team for player guarding outside the designated defensive area. Subsequent violations will then result in a one-shot technical foul, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption.
5. Pressing—In the final one minute of the game, provided the point difference is 5 points or less, both teams may play full court, man to man defense. Double-team in backcourt is not allowed. Teams will have up to 15 seconds to get the ball across mid-court.
6. Screens and Picks—“On the ball” screens or picks and screens “away” from the ball are legal, if properly executed.
7. Traveling and Double Dribbling—Officials, depending on skill level of the players, may use discretion if a player travels while starting or stopping his/her dribble. However, if a player gains an advantage by traveling or double dribbling, play will be stopped for the violation, and the opposing team will be awarded the ball out-of-bounds.
8. Fouling Out—To prevent rough play, players will foul out on their fifth foul.
9. 3-point shots—All field goals are two points.
10. Isolation Plays—Clearing out to allow one player to go one-on-one is a violation, resulting in a turnover. The same is true for players forming a wall for the ball handler to come around.
11. Coach on Floor—One coach from each team may be on the floor while the clock is running to help his/her team learn to score and play defense. Coaches must stay outside the court’s 3-point line (not near the baseline) and may not touch the ball or a player and otherwise assist in any way except verbal instructions.
12. Coaches Box—Other than the coach listed above, coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
13. Overtime Periods—No overtime will be played in this age division. A game may end in a tie.
14. Equal Playing Time—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.

Section 5--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 2 Boys and Girls (All Divisions)

Size of Ball—27.0” or 27.5” (Junior Ball)

Height of Goal—8 feet

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw—10 feet (no crossing the line).

Designated Defensive Area—The Front Court.

Special Rules

1. Defensive Restrictions—**Players do not wear colored wristbands** for defensive designation in this age division. Zone defense is also allowed. Double-teaming or trapping (3 or more people) is allowed with the following restrictions: Only on the person with the ball and only when that person is inside the 3-point arc.
2. Substitutions—**Allowed anytime there is a dead ball.**
3. Penalty for Illegal Defense—The officials will issue one warning per half to a team for player guarding outside the designated defensive area, double-teaming illegally or other defensive violations outlined above. Subsequent violations are considered to be illegal defense and will result in a one-shot technical foul, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption.
4. Pressing—In the final one minute of the game, provided the point difference is 5 points or less, both teams may play full court defense. Teams will have up to 15 seconds to cross midcourt.
5. Screens and Picks—Properly executed screens or picks are allowed, both “on” or “off” the ball.
6. 3-point shots—All field goals are two points.
7. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
8. Equal Playing Time—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.
9. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner. This sudden death period will not last more than 2 actual minutes (clock will be set and run continuously). If neither team scores a point during this time, the game will end in a tie.

Section 6--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 3 Boys and Girls (All Divisions)

Size of Ball: 28.5" (Women's Ball)

Height of Goal: 9 feet (unless in gym without adjustable goals)

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw—10 feet (no crossing line).

Designated Defensive Area:

1st half (Boys and Girls) - Front Court

2nd Half (BOYS) - Full Court (unless team is ahead by 10+ points)

2nd Half (GIRLS) – Half Court (Except in the final minute of the game, provided the point differential is 5 points or less, both teams may play Full Court defense).

Special Rules

1. Equal Playing Time—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.
2. Penalty for Illegal Defense— The officials will usually issue one warning to a team for players guarding outside the designated defensive area, or other defensive violations outlined above. Subsequent violations will then result in a one-shot technical foul, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption.
3. Backcourt Guarding—Backcourt guarding is not allowed in the first half. If a **boy's team** is leading by 10 or more points in the second-half, the same "no guarding in the backcourt" rule applies.
4. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
5. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner. This sudden death period will not last more than 2 actual minutes (clock will be set and run continuously). If neither team scores a point during this time, the game will end in a tie.

Section 7--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 4 Boys and Girls (All Divisions)

Size of Ball: 28.5" (Women's Ball)

Height of Goal: 10 feet for boys
9 feet for girls (unless in gym without adjustable goals)

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw—12 feet (no crossing the line)

Designated Defensive Area: 1st half - Front Court
2nd Half - Full Court (unless team is ahead by 10+ points)

Special Rules

1. Equal Playing Time—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.
2. Backcourt Guarding—Backcourt guarding is not allowed in the first half. If a team is leading by 10 or more points in the second-half, the same “no guarding in the backcourt” rule applies.
3. Penalty for Illegal Defense—First offense for guarding in the backcourt during the first half, or with a 10-point lead, will be a warning. Thereafter, a technical foul will be called (one free throw, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption).
4. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
5. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner. This sudden death period will not last more than 2 actual minutes (clock will be set and run continuously). If neither team scores a point during this time, the game will end in a tie.

Section 8--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 5 & 6 Boys and Girls

Size of Ball:

5th Grade Boys and Girls- 28.5" (Women's Ball)

6th Grade Boys- 29.5" (Men's Ball)

6th Grade Girls- 28.5" (Women's Ball)

1. Equal Playing Time—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.
2. Backcourt Guarding—Backcourt guarding is not allowed for teams holding a 10 or more point lead.
3. Penalty for Illegal Defense—First offense for guarding in the backcourt with a 10 or more-point lead will be a warning. Thereafter, a technical foul will be called (one free throw, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption).
4. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
5. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (The clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner

Section 9--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 7-12th Boys and Girls

Size of Ball: Male 29.5" (Men's Ball)
Female 28.5" (Women's Ball)

Special Rules

1. **Equal Playing Time**—The league recommends equal playing time for all players but does not monitor or enforce this. Equal playing time is left up to the coaches and is an internal team issue.
2. **Backcourt Guarding**—Backcourt guarding is not allowed for teams holding a 10 or more point lead.
3. **Penalty for Illegal Defense**—First offense for guarding in the backcourt with a 10 or more point lead will be a warning. Thereafter, a technical foul will be called (one free throw, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption).
4. **Coaches Box**—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
5. **Overtime Periods**—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner.