

New Rule Guidance Season: 2026/2027







Following the publication of the updated Rules of Hockey by the FIH, this document outlines the changes that will be implemented across England Hockey competitions for the 2026/2027 season applying to all 11-a-side hockey - both adults and juniors. It is intended to provide players, coaches, officials, and competition organisers with clear guidance on where these rule updates will be applied and what effect they will have.







These changes will come into effect for England Hockey competitions from the start of the 2026/2027 season (1 September 2026). However, leagues, clubs and organisers may choose to adopt the new rules earlier during pre-season or summer competitions, where appropriate. This early adoption can help participants become familiar with the updated rules ahead of the new season.

As always, participants are advised to check the specific regulations of each competition, as there may be variations from the standard rules outlined in this guidance. This is particularly important in relation to match timings, where competition-specific regulations may differ.

Rule	The Change	Effect on Game	National Hockey (Grade 1)	Area Hockey (Grade 2 & below)
Rule 2.1 – Too Many Players on the field	Where this materially affects the match, the captain must now receive a Yellow Card. Where there is no material impact, a personal penalty may be given at the umpire's discretion.	The sanction is now clear and specific for when this has a material impact on the game.	✓ Applies to all Competitions	✓ Applies to all Competitions
Rule 5.1 – Match Timings	Specifies quarters of 15 minutes plus 10 minutes for half time.	Longer half-time by default. Impact on pitch bookings and time required for games.	✗ <u>EHL - All Divisions</u> 4 x quarters of 17 minutes 30 seconds. 2 minutes quarter time. 5-10 minutes half time (agreed before game starts)	✗ <u>Area League - Prem</u> 4 x quarters of 17 minutes 30 seconds. 2 minutes quarter time. 5 minutes half time



			<u>Other Comps</u> Varies – please check competition regulations	<u>Area League - Other Divisions</u> 2 x halves of 35 minutes. 5 minutes half time <u>Other Comps</u> Varies – please check competition regulations
Rule 8.2 & 13.3a – Stopping time after a goal or the award of a Penalty Corner	Time and play are stopped following the award of a goal and/or a Penalty Corner	Introduces the stopping of the clock after a goal or Penalty Corner has been scored. Impact on pitch bookings and times required for games.	 Does not apply by default to competitions	 Does not apply by default to competitions
Rule 9.10 – Aerial balls (rule trial now adopted)	Defenders may approach once the receiver has touched the ball (previously only once the receiver controlled the ball and brought it to the ground), provided the initial 5 metres of safe space were respected.	This changes how the aerial rule will be officiated. Defenders may engage earlier, not requiring the ball to be on the floor. Was used in National League Prem previous season, and implementation across all divisions will allow greater consistency. Player safety remains paramount, and this should be emphasised at all times.	 Applies to all Competitions	 Applies to all Competitions
Rule 10.2 – GKs are permitted to use their stick and body to deflect the ball over the backline	The updated wording clarifies that when the ball is inside the circle a goalkeeper is defending, and they have their stick in hand, they may use both their stick and body to deflect the ball over the backline or play it in any direction.	Clarifies and removes any previous uncertainty.	 Applies to all Competitions	 Applies to all Competitions

<p>Rule 11.8 – Ball hitting an umpire</p>	<p>Specifies that if the ball hits an umpire or an unauthorised person on the field, play shall continue unless the contact results in an advantage to one team, in which case the match shall re-start with a bully.</p>	<p>This ensures that an accidental touch by an umpire does not unfairly influence the outcome of a match.</p>	<p> Applies to all Competitions</p>	<p> Applies to all Competitions</p>
<p>Rule 13.3(n) – Penalty Corner protective equipment</p>	<p>Updated to state that players need to remove their Penalty Corner equipment safely and as soon as they are able. Increases clarity that players may pass the ball from a defensive free hit but not take a self-pass whilst still wearing equipment.</p> <p>Also adds explicit guidance about removing equipment safely. If any person is hit on or above the knee in a normal stance, the player throwing the equipment must receive a Yellow Card.</p>	<p>The first part of the rule provides clarity and emphasises the need to remove equipment safely and quickly.</p> <p>The second part strengthens the requirement to dispose of equipment safely and provides clear guidance to umpires on appropriate sanctions for dangerous situations.</p>	<p> Applies to all Competitions</p>	<p> Applies to all Competitions</p>
<p>Field & Equipment Specifications – Goalkeeper Equipment</p>	<p>Maximum permitted length of a goalkeeper’s hand protector (left glove) is increased to 365 mm</p>	<p>This ensures manufacturers can produce CE-compliant large gloves that are also legal under the FIH Rules</p>	<p> Applies to all Competitions</p>	<p> Applies to all Competitions</p>