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**Air Hockey -
Official Rules of Play**



AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

Table of Contents

SECTION I: DEFINITIONS OF OBJECTS OF PLAY	2
A. Air Hockey	2
B. Puck.....	2
C. Mallet.....	2
D. Air Hockey Table	3
SECTION II: AIR HOCKEY TABLE BOUNDARIES	5
SECTION III: GAMES, SET, MATCHES, WINNING, AND SCORING	6
A. Game.....	6
B. Set	6
C. Match.....	7
D. Scoring.....	7
SECTION IV: STARTING A MATCH.....	9
SECTION V. PUCK CONTACT RULES.....	10
SECTION VIII. ESTABLISHING POSSESSION.....	10
SECTION VI. TIME RESTRICTIONS.....	11
A. Game Play Time Limits.....	11
B. Match Play Time Limits.....	11
C. Event Play Time Limits	12
SECTION VII. IN AND OUT OF PLAY AND STOPPAGE.....	13
A. In Play / Out of play.....	13
B. Time Outs (Elected Stoppage).....	14
C. Interference	14
SECTION VIII. FOULS AND PENALTIES	15
A. Fouls.....	15
B. Penalties.....	16
SECTION IX. FORFEITS	16
SECTION X. INJURIES AND EMERGENCIES.....	17
SECTION XI. PLAYER CONDUCT	17
SECTION XII. PLAYER RIGHTS.....	18
SECTION XIII. OFFICIATING.....	18
A. AHPA Officiating Requirements	18
B. Official’s Responsibility	18
C. Authority	19
D. Limitations of Authority and Discipline.....	20

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

SECTION I: DEFINITIONS OF OBJECTS OF PLAY

A. Air Hockey

The term “Airhockey”, “Air Hockey” and “Air-hockey” all refer to the professional sport played using the materials, objects, and rules defined in the document. The original term *Air-hockey* was created by Brunswick Corporation in 1972 and is a registered trademark of Brunswick Corporation. For purposes of these rules, the term used will be “Air Hockey”.

B. Puck

The “puck” in Air hockey acts as the object of play which players are attempting to direct into a goal. The requirements for a puck are as follows:

1. For professional play, the puck must have the following characteristics:
 - a) Exactly 3.5 inches in diameter and ¼” inch in height
 - a. These dimensions apply to brand new pucks. Pucks exceeding these dimensions may not be used.
 - b. As pucks become more experienced, the dimensions will reduce slightly due to contact forces reducing the diameter of the puck and rounding the vertical edges. An “experienced” puck may only reduce in diameter by 1/16 of an inch. Any reduction beyond that disqualifies the puck from use.
 - b) Be composed entirely of Lexan plastic material
 - c) Be yellow, red, or florescent green in color
2. For professional play, pucks must have at least one layer of white plastic tape on the top side. The tape serves to better increase visibility. Pucks with a one layer of tape on both sides may be used only if both players agree. For casual play, tape is not required.

C. Mallet

The mallet is the device used by each player to strike the puck. The mallet is a cylindrical object which may have a knob in the center known as a “high-top” mallet or with no knob, known as a “low-top”. The requirements for a mallet are as follows:

1. The overall weight of the mallet including any “attachments” must be 6 oz. or less.
2. The mallet must be a circular shape with overall diameter less than or equal to 4-1/16”.
3. The outer striking surface of the mallet, also known as the “rim”, must be at least ½” in height.
4. The mallet may be any color; however, the outside rim of the mallet must be a different color than game surface of table.
5. The mallet may be made of any material (ex. plastic, wood, metal) so long as it adheres to the weight and size restrictions listed above and is entirely comprised on that same material.
6. No mallet may be altered by sloping the playing surface in order to create an angled striking or defending surface.
7. The mallet may be enhanced with other materials known as “attachments” so long at the materials are:
 - a. Not attached to the outer striking surface (rim)

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

- b. Do not result in the mallet violating the weight or size restrictions
- c. Do not contact the puck during play.

D. Air Hockey Table

An Air Hockey table, for use in professional play, is defined as a table structure with specific characteristics as defined below. The Air Hockey table consists of a table top which includes the playing surface, rails, an air chamber attached underneath the playing surface, and an air motor. The air motor top emits pressured air into the air chamber which is then routed through pores onto the playing surface creating a field of air. The puck floats on the field of air. In the middle of each of the smaller ends of the table top is a goal. The 2 goal structures are metallic with an opening large enough for the puck to enter and then fall to the bottom area of the goal and be ejected through a lower opening. The table top rests inside of a “base” or body chamber, and both goals connect to the top and the body. The body has 4 plastic “legs” that connect to the 4 corners underneath the body. Each leg will have a metallic “foot” or circular metallic component that attaches to the legs and rests on the floor. The detailed requirements are as follows:

1. The overall height of the Air hockey table from floor to the top of the goal must be between 29.5 inches and 33 inches.
2. The surface of the Air hockey table:
 - a) Must be 93 inches long by 33 inches in diameter
 - b) Must contain pores approximately 1/32 inch in diameter and spaced equidistance from each other in two dimensions approximately every square inch apart.
 - c) Must be completely enclosed with metallic railing along and 2 metallic goals
 - d) Must have an opening 13 – 13 1/8 inches wide for each of the goals exactly centered on each of the shorter sides.
 - e) Has two goal structures which rest on the two ends of the shorter railings and exposes the goal opening for the puck.
 - f) Should be levelled such that a free floating puck will remain at rest in the center with minimal drifting away from the center without contact.
 - g) Must have a center “stripe” be placed exactly in the center of the table connecting the two longer sides and dividing the table into 2 equal halves. The width of the stripe must be between ¼ and 1 inch in thickness and a different color than the surface of the table.
 - h) May have a painted circle present at the center of the table surface but is not required.
3. The Surface railing:
 - a) Must be made entirely of metal.
 - b) Must be secured to the top with screws and tightened until the rails have no movability.
 - c) Have 2 long metallic rails that run each of the longer table length and then connect with two shorter metallic railings for each of the shorter sides at a 45 degree angle and then terminate just prior to the goal opening.
 - d) Have an inner “contact area” less than ½ inches in height and no greater than 1”.
 - e) Have no paint or other adhesive other than natural dirt or dust buildup on the contact surface side of the rail.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

4. Regarding the goals:
 - a) Each Air Hockey table will have exactly two goals, one in the exact center of each of the shorter ends.
 - b) The goal dimensions must be approximately 16 ½ inches high by 16 ¼ inches wide by 3 3/8 to 3 ½ inches deep.
 - c) Each goal must be made entirely of metal.
 - d) The color of the goals must be different from both the table surface and rails.
 - e) The goal will fit onto the two short rails ends and bolt to the table snugly.
 - f) Each goal opening for the puck to enter will be no less than ½ inches and no great than ¾ inches in height.
5. Regarding the body, electronics, legs, and feet:
 - a) The table body can be made of any material so long as it supports the weight of the top and is sturdy and safe.
 - b) The table top fits neatly into the table body, and is secured with screws that run from the outside of the body and into the table top.
 - c) The goals also are attached to the table body with screws.
 - d) Electronics may include a scoring mechanism that rests at the center of one of the long rails or an overhead scorer; however, these are not required. The electronics that score points when a puck enters the goal do not have to be in operation for professional play.
 - e) The 4 legs and feet should be attached to the underneath of the table body with screws. The table feet should be adjusted by unscrewing the proper amount of threading to provide the proper height requirement and levelling described earlier.
6. Regarding Shields:
 - a) Shields are plastic safety devices attached to the 2 long side rails and extending upwards. Their purpose is to provide a contact barrier for “flying” pucks that would normally leave the table due to momentum generating a lift that exceeds the rail height.
 - b) Shields are approved for play if they are no more than 8 inches above the table and are perpendicular to the surface of the table.
7. Air Hockey tables require electricity and may only be used for competitive play when the air motor is running and emitting air through the pores.
8. All Air Hockey tables produced by the following Air Hockey table produced are approved for use in AHPA professional competitive play:
 - a) Brunswick
 - b) Dynamo
 - c) Gold Standard

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

SECTION II: AIR HOCKEY TABLE BOUNDARIES

1. An Air Hockey table may be placed against a wall or other physical barrier such that one of the long sides makes contact with the barrier.
2. Only one long side of the Airhockey table may be restricted by a barrier. If one side of the table is restricted by a barrier or wall, the other side must have a minimum of six feet of open space without any barriers.
3. The standard “Player Space” for an Air Hockey table is defined as the space immediately behind the goal scoring area and constitutes the three dimensions of space. The width is a fixed distance equal to the width of the goal side of the Air Hockey Table. The height is a fixed distance extending from the floor to eight feet or the ceiling whichever is lower. The depth is the only variable dimension extending from the edge of the Air Hockey table away perpendicularly.
 - a. The minimum *Player Space* depth is three and one half feet. Any Air Hockey table position with less than three feet of Player Space depth restricted by a wall of physical barrier will not be eligible for legal play.
 - b. Player Space Depth may be shared by two Air Hockey tables where the Depth dimension between two tables overlaps. A shared Depth space must be no smaller than six feet of total space between the two goal ends of the Air Hockey tables.
 - c. Event Coordinators may petition for an exception to this rule in the event that the location of an event lacks sufficient space necessary to provide
 - d. Although it is not defined as part of the standards *Player Space*, a player may also position him/herself either of the two sides (if the long side is not restricted by a barrier) so long as no part of his/her body extends beyond the imaginary barrier created by the centerline and thus entering into the opponent’s portion of the table space.
4. The “Officiating Space” is defined as the space in the middle of either of the long sides of the table in the center area of the side. The official space is defined as the three dimensions of width equal to four feet centered on the long side of the table and extending back in depth up to six feet away from the long side of the table perpendicularly and height extending upward from the floor to a height of eight feet or to the ceiling, whichever is lower.
 - a. The official may position him/herself within the *Officiating Space* no closer than one foot and no more than five feet from the table during officiating.
 - b. The official may sit or stand in the *Officiating Space* as long as he/she can clearly see the entire surface of the table.
 - c. If the Air Hockey table has an overhead or other visual barrier (i.e. a pole) that could inhibit view of the centerline, the official may offset
5. The “Audience Space” is the space available for other to view the play. The *Audience Space* is defined as all space beyond five feet from any part of the Air Hockey table. No other person may be within the five foot boundary except the players, teammate(s), and official(s).
 - a. Exception to this rule may be granted by AHPA in the circumstance that an event has limited space and Air Hockey table positioning within the available space will not permit a full five feet.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

- b. Any exceptions to this rule should be noted in the petition for sanctioning per the official AHPA sanctioning guidelines and procedures.

SECTION III: GAMES, SET, MATCHES, WINNING, AND SCORING

A. Game

A game is defined as having the following characteristics:

1. One Air Hockey table is used.
2. One puck is used.
3. Only two players, one on each of the short sides of the table, compete simultaneously in a game. Teams may compete in which players take turns in an agreed-upon rotation; however, only obey team member may actively play at any given time.
4. Each player must use exactly one mallet on the table surface at any given time during play. No other type of object or body part may be used to contact the puck at any time.
5. Players each strike the puck with the mallet and attempt to direct the puck into the opposing player's goal.
 - a) An attempt to score in this fashion is described as "taking a shot" or "shooting".
 - b) The player attempting a shot is referred to as the "attacking player" or "attacker".
 - c) The player defending a shot is known as the "defending player" or "defender".
6. Both player start a standard game with zero goals. In the event of a "Leveled" or "Handicap" system, one player may be awarded up to 6 points at the start of a game. Please see the AHPA Handicap Point System for details.
7. Goals are earned as described by Section II-D Scoring.
8. An official AHPA standard game of Air Hockey declares the first player to accumulate seven goals as the winner. Other non-standard game lengths may be approved for special events as outlined by the official AHPA sanctioning guidelines.

B. Set

A "Set" is defined as having the following characteristics:

1. A series of games played by the same two players or teams. A set length may be any number of games greater than 1.
2. The length of the set must be specified prior to starting play, and all players competing in the set must agree on the set length.
3. For standard professional play, the player or team who achieves a number of games > 50% of the total number of set games wins the set.
4. In the event that a set for non-standard professional play purposes consists of an even number of games and both players/teams win 50% of the games, a tie will be awarded and may be broken by a tie-breaking method that all players/teams agree upon prior to beginning the set.
5. After each game in a set, players will alternate table sides.
6. A set will begin with a face-off or coin flip as described previously. The side of the table where initial possession was established will retain the starting possession for subsequent games.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

C. Match

A “Match” is defined as having the following characteristics:

1. A single game, a set, or multiple sets.
2. The number of games/sets that will constitute the match must be determined by all players and/or teams prior to the match start.
3. For standard professional play, a match, like a set, must consist of an odd number of games or sets, and the team that wins more than 50% of the games/sets wins the match.
4. In the event that a match for non-standard professional play purposes consists of even number of games/sets and both players/teams win 50% of the games/sets, a tie will be awarded and may be broken by a tie-breaking method that all players/teams agree upon prior to beginning the match.
5. A match may maintain possession start based on an initial set face-off or may have a new Initial Possession competition for each game or set. Players must agree prior to beginning the match how possession management will work.

D. Scoring

1. A goal is scored when the puck enters and remains inside the goal. When a goal is scored, the player on the opposite side of the table from which the goal was scored adds a goal to his/her total goal count for the game.
2. If the puck partially enters the goal and remains partially exposed, at rest, and:
 - a. Is tilted such that it has broken the horizontal plane of the goal, then a score has occurred and a point is awarded to the opposing player and regular play resumes.
 - b. Is not tilted thereby not causing a breakage of the horizontal plane, then a goal has not been scored. In this circumstance, the defending player may either:
 - i. Declare to the official and other player (or just the other player if no official is present), that he/she is surrendering possession. Then play stops immediately, and the player may remove the puck and give it to the opposing player. The puck then remains out of play until the official or receiving player declare the puck in play.
 - ii. Attempt to dislodge the puck using legal puck contract methods with the mallet.
 1. If the player is successful in dislodging the puck, normal play resumes immediately without any required declaration from the official.
 2. If a foul occurs during the attempted dislodge process, the opposing player will be awarded possession unless an own goal is scored.
 3. If the result of the attempt is a score in the defending player scoring on him/herself (own goal), the opposing player will be awarded a point and regular play resumes immediately.
3. If the puck enters the goal and rebounds out of the goal mouth back on to the playing surface and thus does not remain in the goal, a goal is not scored. However, a puck which rebounds out of the goal mouth and strikes the defending player's hand, and rebounds back into the goal does result in the scoring of a goal.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

4. If a puck contacts a player's hand, arm, or any body part (illegal contact) and then enters and remains in the goal:
 - a. The goal is scored so long as the official determines that velocity of the puck prior to the illegal contact would have directed the puck into the goal.
 - b. The goal is not scored if the judgment of the official is that the illegal contact altered the velocity of the puck into the goal such that the original velocity would not have directed the puck into the goal. In this event, the official should award possession of the puck to the opposing player.
5. If a goal is scored after the table loses power:
 - a. A point is awarded if the puck was contacted by the player attempting the shot prior to the table losing power.
 - b. A point is not awarded if the puck was struck after the table lost power. In this circumstance, the official will award possession of the puck to the player who attempted the shot once the table power has been restored.
6. In the event that an attacking player is deemed to have "lost control of the mallet" (as described in Fouls section of these rules) during the a shot attempt:
 - a. No goal would be scored if the puck enters the defender's goal and the referee judges that loss of mallet control occurred prior to the goal being scored.
 - b. A goal is scored for the defending player in the event of an own goal so long as the puck was not contacted by the defending player. If the official deems that the defending player did contact the puck, no goal is awarded, and the official awards possession of the puck to the defending player.
 - c. The attacking player is permitted to stop the puck with hands or body. If the attacking player is successful in acquiring possession of the puck prior to scoring an own goal, he/she will surrender the puck to the official who will award possession to the defending player.
7. In the event that a defending player loses the control of the mallet (as described in the fouls section of these rules) during the course of a shot attempt:
 - a. The goal counts for the attacking player if it scores so long as no additional contact occurs on the puck by the attacker after the loss of mallet by the defender.
 - i. If a score occurs by additional contact by the attacker after the defender loses the mallet, the referee will not award the goal and will award possession of the puck to the attacker.
 - b. The defender may not use hands or body to stop the shot if the shot occurred prior to or simultaneously with the loss of the mallet.
 - c. If the defending player does use a body part to stop the puck in this circumstance, the official shall declare a Goaltending foul and enforce the Goaltending rules as described in the Fouls section of these rules.
8. *Interference* is defined as foreign objects on the table or playing surface, obvious unnecessary noise or distractions or actions by spectators that cause distractions to any or all players, and/or any other incident so deemed by official. If interference occurs and is called by the official during a shot that results in a score, the point does not count. The puck is then returned to the player who possessed it prior to the interference and play restarts.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

SECTION IV: STARTING A MATCH

1. Every standard professional match begins with a process of determining starting sides and establishing initial possession.
2. A coin toss is first used to determine starting sides if players do not agree. The player winning the coin toss chooses his/her starting side.
3. In the event that both players are 5'0" in height or greater and both physically able to reach the center of the table, then the initial possession is determined by a "face-off" defined as the follows:
 - a. The puck is placed in the exact center of the table surface and held steady by the official.
 - b. Players are asked to take starting positions and are allowed to advance to within one inch of the puck so long as they do not contact the center line prior to release.
 - c. Once both players are positioned, the official will call "players ready" then release control of the puck anywhere in a one to four second period of time.
 - d. When the official releases the puck, the players volley to obtain control.
 - e. The official should make a determined effort to release the puck without causing any motion to it. If the puck attains excessive motion, the official may declare the face-off null and redo it.
 - f. If both players contact the puck resulting in its leaving the playing surface, then the face-off is repeated.
 - g. If either player contacts the puck before the official releases it then a false start has been committed. Each player is allowed one false start with no penalty. If a second false start is committed then the non-offending player is awarded first possession.
4. If one or both players are less than 5'0" in height or physically incapable of reaching the center of the table without resting his/her body on the surface of the table, then a coin toss will be used to determine first possession. The player of lower skill level or tournament seed will be allowed to call the coin toss.
5. Initial possession is established based on the following criteria:
 - a. A player scores on his/her opponent.
 - b. The official determined that a player demonstrates clear control of the motion of the puck. A puck that has not yet left the centerline cannot constitute possession for either player.
 - c. The player wins the coin-toss for the circumstance describes in #4
6. During the face-off process, the centerline rules are still in effect.
7. Once initial possession has been established, the official will declare who won the initial possession.
8. After initial possession has been established, the puck will always start on the same side of the table for the duration of the match.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

SECTION V. PUCK CONTACT RULES

1. When the puck is in contact with any part of the centerline, either player may contact it. To further clarify, if the majority of the puck resides on the other half of the center line with a very small percentage of the puck still in contact with the center line, the player without the majority of the puck on his side may still legally contact the puck.
2. A player may hand serve the puck by removing from his/her goal, placing it on the table, releasing it, and then executing play only after it has entered his goal and a goal has been awarded to the opposing player.
3. The puck may be contacted with any part of the mallet so long as the mallet does not touch the top of the puck constituting "topping". (See topping in Fouls and Penalties section.)
 - a. Any contact with the mallet where the mallet is lifted up to an angle of less than 40-degrees in alignment with the table surface, even when the contact occurs on the side of the puck, will constitute "topping".
4. In any standard AHPA sanctioned competitive game or match, the yellow puck will serve as the default required puck. A red or green puck may be used only if both players/teams agree.
5. Pucks may not be changed during a game or match unless both players/teams agree or unless the official declares it necessary due to clear non-playability of the puck. Such a change in pucks must, if possible, be to the same kind of puck. *Non-playability of the puck* is defined as follows:
 - a. The puck no longer floats freely on the table and remains in a stable resting position.
 - b. Twenty-five percent or more of bank shots are leaving the table causing a potential hazard to the people in close proximity
 - c. The puck appears to have a crack or fissure that spans from the top to bottom.
 - d. The diameter of the puck due to excessive impact has reduced its size below the minimum puck size threshold defined in Section I.

SECTION VIII. ESTABLISHING POSSESSION

1. *Drifting* is defined as a controlled movement of the puck by a player on his/her side of the table. This includes the puck moving in a single vector towards the center line followed by a shot as well as multiple vectors of movement where intentional contact of the puck is used to control its motion about his/her side of the table.
2. The puck is considered to be in a state of *Transition* when it is moving freely about the table and neither player has established *Possession* as defined below.
3. A player is considered to have established *Possession* of the puck when he/she is able to demonstrate the ability to:
 - a. Make willful controlled movements of the puck using the mallet to *drift* the puck.
 - b. Willfully keep the puck at rest on his/her side of the table.
 - c. Use legal contact skills to capture and gain control of a puck that is in *Transition*.
 - d. Execute a willful shot from a *Drift* or *Transition* state.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

- e. Serve the puck into play after it has been declared out of play and then declared in play by the official (see the In and Out of Bounds section below for more information).
4. A puck that leave the surface of the table and strikes the front of the goal face above the opening that denotes a score (like the crossbar on a soccer goal) and returns to the table surface is not considered to be controlled.
6. A defensive player who blocks a shot by holding steady or by striking the puck sideways (horizontally in parallel with the goal) or backwards (towards his/her own goal), causing the puck to leave the table, then the official should award *Possession* to the defensive player.
7. If the defensive player strikes the puck in an offensive manner (any movement towards the opposing player's goal away from the horizontal parallel plan to his/her own goal) and causes the puck to leave the playing surface, this constitutes *charging*. The official will award the offensive player possession of the puck.
8. When Interference has occurred as defined in Section VII.C, the following criteria will be used to determine to whom possession is awarded.
 - a. If either player had clear possession of the puck in the judgment of the official when the interference occurred, then that player will be awarded possession.
 - b. If the puck was in a transitional state with no clear established possession when the interference occurred, then the *In Play Restoration Process* will be suspended and a Face-off used to restart play.
 - c. IN the event that the referee is unable to determine which player had possession when the interference occurred, then the *In Play Restoration Process* will be suspended and a Face-off used to restart play.

SECTION VI. TIME RESTRICTIONS

A. Game Play Time Limits

1. A player has seven seconds to contact the puck causing it to cross the centerline. The seven seconds begins as soon as the puck enters and remains on that player's side of the centerline.
 - a. If a puck is flipping around on its edge on one player's side of the table, then the player may wait for it to stop. The seven second timer does not stop until the puck comes to rest.
2. When a player is scored upon, he/she will have a maximum of ten seconds to remove the puck from the goal and place it in play.
 - a. The ten seconds timer begins as soon as the puck has fallen completely through the goal and is available for the player to place into play.
 - b. The puck is deemed to be in play when the play has placed the puck onto the surface of the table and released contact with the serving hand.
 - c. This rule is suspended during the course of a time-out.

B. Match Play Time Limits

1. Players may take a break of up to a maximum of two minutes in between games during a competition set or match.
 - a. The subsequent game will begin when both players declare their readiness or the 2 minute break time limit has expired.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

- b. During an AHPA challenge match, players have a maximum of one minute in between games; however, each player may choose to take one 2-minute break in between games in each set of the match.
2. Players must be permitted a 15-minute break at a minimum before the player's next set or match is called during a tournament or multi-set match.

C. Event Play Time Limits

1. In a tournament or multi-match competition when a match has been called, both players/teams must report to the table where the match has been called within fifteen minutes and check in with the match official.
 - a. The timer begins at the moment the match has been called and does not stop until both players have reported to:
 - i. The match official at the table where the match has been called if another match has not been called on the same table.
 - ii. The tournament director if another match has been called on the same table because of the delay.
 - iii. Once the player has reported, the timer stops.
 - b. For a player who has not reported by 15 minutes:
 - i. One goal is awarded to the opposing player upon reaching the fifteenth minute, and then one additional goal is awarded for each minute afterwards.
 - ii. The goal allocation ceases when the player has reported to the match official or tournament director as indicated in 1-a above, or the number of goals awarded equals the number required to constitute a match forfeit.
 1. For standard AHPA game play, when 7 goals have been awarded, a game has been forfeited. For non-standard games, a game is forfeited when the number of goals equals the number of goals required to win a game.
 2. When the number of games necessary to win the match have been forfeited, the match is officially declared a forfeit.
 - c. Under no circumstances may goals that have been awarded to an opposing player as per 2-b-i above be revoked in the event of this time violation regardless of whether the opposing player, match official, or event leadership.
2. If a player has been informed personally by the match announcer that his/her match has been called, the player has five minutes to report to the table for competition. If the player does not comply by the end of five minutes, the same goal allocation process is implemented as described in 1-b above but starting at five minutes instead of fifteen minutes.
3. A player must be permitted a maximum 5-minute break upon completing a match before being required to report to a match for officiating duties. This rule only applies for events where competitors also serve as officials.
4. During an event being run using what is known as the "Swiss" format, special time restrictions apply as described below:

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

- a. Once a match has been officially announced and time is written on the match card by the current chart director in charge, players have five minutes to report to their match table.
- b. If either player has not reported by the expiration of the fifth minute, he/she automatically forfeits the first game
- c. Thereafter, each five minute period that expires without the violating player reporting to play results in the forfeiture of a subsequent game
- d. The match will be declared a forfeit when the number of games forfeited equals the number of games required to win the match.

SECTION VII. IN AND OUT OF PLAY AND STOPPAGE

A. In Play / Out of play

1. *In Play* is defined as the state when the game of Airhockey is live and all rules are in full force.
2. *Out of Play* is defined as the state when play is suspended and no game activity may commence until the official declares a state of *In Play*.
3. The legal bounds of play are the table's playing surface, the inner walls of the rails, the front faces of the goals, the interiors of the goals, and the player's mallets.
 - a. If the puck touches any other object(s) while it is *In Play*, whether by interference or by foul (unless the foul is nullified), the official will declare the puck to be *Out of Play*.
 - b. When the puck leaves the playing surface and contacts anything except a player's mallet, the puck will be deemed *Out of Play*.
4. A puck, which grazes the top of the rail, is deemed *Out of Play* even if it returns to the table surface.
5. If the puck bounces off a shield that is attached to either of the two side rails and then returns to the table, the puck is deemed out of play.
6. *In Play Restoration Process*: When a puck is in a state of *Out of Play*, the official will award possession as defined in the *Establishing Possession or Penalties and Fouls* sections. The official will then ask the player not in possession if he/she is ready. When given verbal confirmation of readiness or a head nod, the official will declare "*In Play*" verbally, and the puck will then be officially "*In Play*".
 - a. If the player whom the official would ask for readiness, based on the circumstances described above, declares "*Ready*" prior to being queried by the official, the official may pause for 1-2 seconds and then declare "*In Play*" without asking for readiness.
 - b. In case of delay of five seconds or more by either player to respond to the official's readiness query, the official will proceed to declare *In Play*.
7. In a multi-game match where players alternate sides and starting possession remains at one side, subsequent games begin when the official verbally declares "in play" after confirming that both players are ready.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

B. Time Outs (Elected Stoppage)

1. A *Time-out* is defined as a willful stoppage of player by either player currently on the table.
2. Each player is awarded and may use one time-out per game.
3. The time-out may last up to a maximum of 10 seconds.
4. The official will verbally declare the time-out upon request if the requesting player has not previously used the time-out in that game. The official will then count starting at 1 until reaching the maximum time either silently or out loud.
5. The requesting player may end the time out prior to the maximum expiration by verbally declaring “time in” at any point before the maximum time has expired.
6. Upon a declaration of “time in” by the player calling the time out or the expiration of the maximum time out time period, the referee will restart play per the *In Play / Out of Play* section above.
7. A player may use a time-out only when the puck is in his/her possession or out of play. When the puck is in play, the official should only grant a time-out if the player calling the time-out has *Possession* of the puck.
8. A player must make either a clear verbal indication of a time out or use the universal hand signal of the two hands forming the letter “T” while making eye contact with the official so that the official understands the player's intention.
9. The time-out does not officially begin until declared by the Official, and the requesting player should remain at the table and continue normal play until the official awards the Time-out.

C. Interference

1. Any activity which, by the officials’ judgment, interferes with the normal flow of play will constitute *Interference*.
2. When the official has declared “Interference”, a state of *Out of Play* automatically ensues. The official will then follow the procedures in the Establishing section to determine which player should be awarded possession.
3. The following circumstances will be considered valid Interference:
 - a. The power to the table discontinues during a game.
 - b. A foreign object of any kind enters the playing area of strikes any part of a player’s body.
 - c. Loud or excessive noise occurs from an observer, official, player, or the environment.
 - d. An unexpected change in lighting occurs.
 - e. A string unpleasant smell is detected.
 - f. An observer moves inside the *Player Space* or *Officiating Space* as defined in Section II.
 - g. Any other circumstance that the official judges to have caused a valid distraction to either player outside of normal activities as defined in these rules.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

SECTION VIII. FOULS AND PENALTIES

A. Fouls

1. When a player loses total control of his own mallet (with or without a string attached) while the puck is in play, the player commits a foul.
2. When the puck is struck in an offensive manner, leaves the playing surface, and remains off the table, the player causing such action commits a foul.
3. Unnecessary or excessive delay of game by a player is considered a foul and loss of puck results. Intentional Stalling is included in this ruling of delay (official decision).
4. If an offensive player hits a puck and the puck wobbles, hitting the hand of the defensive player, but not changing the perceived speed and direction of the puck in the judgment of the official, then no foul occurs.
5. If any part of a player's hand, arm, body, or clothes touches the puck while it is on the table surface, *Palming* will be declared by the official, which constitutes a foul.
 - a. If the puck rises from the table surface and touches the defensive player's hand(s) or arm(s), no foul has been committed, as this activity constitutes an *Out of Play* declaration.
 - b. If *Palming* occurs while the puck is moving in a direct path towards the goal, and the official judges that the puck would have scored had the *Palming* not occurred, then the official will declare that *Goal-tending* has been committed and declare a *Technical Foul*.
6. Any player violating a centerline rule commits a foul.
7. Distractive Noise: Talking to an opponent, a spectator, an official, or oneself during play may be penalized by a foul. Loud noises and excessive screaming can also be considered distracting. An official may warn a player before calling a foul at his/her discretion. Intentional or excessive, distractive talking may be penalized by a "conduct warning" in addition to a foul. Possible distraction violations, which directly lead to a score or a change of possession, should be scrutinized more seriously by an official when determining whether to ignore, warn or penalize the potential violation.
8. If the puck and mallet of the offensive player are both completely on the offensive player's side, the defensive player may not strike either the puck or mallet. Also, the offensive player may not strike the defensive player's mallet in this situation when the defensive player's mallet is completely on his own side. Violation of this rule constitutes a foul.
9. If in the course of hitting the puck legally, a player's mallet extends partially (but not completely) over the centerline, no foul shall be called if his mallet contacts the opposing player's mallet.
10. Although a mallet is allowed to overreach the centerline, the mallet may never completely extend over the centerline, even when following through on a shot. The mallet may never extend further than its diameter across the centerline. Violation of this rule constitutes a foul.
11. Any player who, on his hand serve, makes a score in his opponent's goal without having contacted the puck with his/her mallet, commits a foul. In other words, a player cannot just toss the puck into the opponent's goal. The illegal score shall not score a goal, and the player who

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

was illegally scored upon shall have the right to hand serve as the penalty imposed upon the fouling player.

12. If the official decides that excessive force was used by the defensive player in knocking the puck off the table, the defensive player commits a foul.
13. If a goal is scored on a player and he/she is guilty of committing a foul during the course of the play that led to the score, the goal counts and the penalty is nullified.
14. A player calling an additional time-out during a game after his first receives an automatic conduct warning from the official. The official should announce *time-out*, issue the warning by announcing, "conduct warning - extra time-out," and immediately call *time-in*. If the non-offending player was not in possession of the puck, then the official should follow the procedure to properly put the puck back *In Play*.
15. The puck cannot be "topped" by lifting the mallet and placing it on the top of the puck. This cannot be done at any time whether before a serve or after a serve during play. Violation constitutes a foul. Using the mallet to bring an airborne puck to the table or opponent's goal is not a topping violation no matter which side or edge of the puck is contacted.

B. Penalties

1. The penalty for committing a Foul is forfeiture of the puck for the offending player.
2. The penalty for a Technical Foul is a free shot taken by the innocent player at the unprotected goal of the guilty player. After a free shot, play immediately begins when the puck either scores, rebounds from the goal, touches the opponent's end of the table (not sides), or comes to a rest on the playing surface. All free shots must be legal.

SECTION IX. FORFEITS

1. A *Forfeit* is defined as a willful election to terminate playing and declare that the opposing player has won.
2. A player may *forfeit* a game or match but not a goal.
3. To declare a forfeit, a player must:
 - a. Verbally declare to the official that he/she desires to *forfeit*
 - b. Indicate the scope of the *forfeit* (game or match)
4. If a player has declared a forfeit to the official, the official must:
 - a. Verbally confirm with the requesting player that he/she understands that once the forfeit is awarded, it cannot be reversed.
 - i. If the player rescinds the *forfeit* request, then play resumes.
 - ii. If the player acknowledges and does not rescind the *forfeit*, then the official should follow the official event procedures published by the promoter for documenting and declaring a forfeit and inform the event head official.
 - b. The official informs the opposing player that a forfeit has been awarded.
 - c. The official reports to the event head official the decision to *forfeit* and complies with any other event procedures published by the promoter for documenting and declaring a forfeit.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

5. If a player must leave an event, he/she may inform the tournament head official of the intent to withdraw and request that all subsequent matches be forfeited. The event head official will then follow the published event forfeit procedures for documenting a forfeit.
6. Automatic point, game, or match forfeits may result from time violations as defined in section IV.C.1.b.ii of these rules.

SECTION X. INJURIES AND EMERGENCIES

1. If a player becomes injured after using his/her time out, the official may grant an additional Injury Time Out as needed.
2. The two minute break limit may be extended in the event of an injury or emergency by the match official or event management officials.
3. The fifteen minute break limit may be extended in the event of an injury or emergency by the match official or event management officials.

SECTION XI. PLAYER CONDUCT

1. Players are expected to conduct themselves in a professional sportsmanlike manner. The following behaviors that are considered unacceptable and may result in one or more issued Conduct Warnings:
 - a. Excessive or abusive arguing with the official
 - b. Verbal profane language or gestures directed towards any person in the playing vicinity, especially the official, opposing player, or spectators
 - c. Excessively loud shouting or making intentional distracting noise(s)
 - d. Physical assault of another player, spectator, or official
 - e. Intentionally throwing a mallet, puck or any object at any person in the playing vicinity
 - f. Willful Destruction of property
 - g. Taunting of another player (includes but not limited to: cursing, verbal defamation, verbal harassment, gestures)
 - h. Any activity that would be considered a violation of the law in the jurisdiction of the tournament location.
 - i. Any other verbal declaration or activity that violates the location or promoter's code of conduct or AHPA's code of conduct
2. An official issues the conduct warning(s) immediately but must wait until after the game has completed to record the details on the back of the match card and/or report to the tournament officials.
3. A *Foul* as defined in the *Penalties and Fouls* section is incurred upon the second conduct warning received during a match. This second conduct warning denotes an *Unsportsmanlike Conduct warning*.
4. A *Technical Foul* as defined in the *Penalties and Fouls* section is incurred upon the third conduct warning received during a match.
5. A fourth conduct warning results in forfeiture of the current game.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

6. A fifth conduct warning results in forfeiture of the match.
7. If an official feels a player has committed extreme unsportsmanlike conduct, the official may issue multiple "conduct warnings" for one single action. An official may issue enough "conduct warnings" to cause a forfeiture of a game or match immediately if he/she feels the penalty is warranted.

SECTION XII. PLAYER RIGHTS

1. A player is allowed to change mallets at any time during play.
2. Before competition begins, a player has the right to play under the stipulation that no special time-outs for the purpose of clearing sweat from the table be called. Unless a player requests this stipulation from the official either player may request the official to clean the table during a game.
3. If a player desires spectators or players to be quieter while he/she is playing, he/she should ask the official to request quiet from the crowd. If the official does not believe the noise to be unusual, then the official does not have to request the quiet. The player desiring quiet must not abuse the crowd.
4. If an official coaches a player or engages in any questionable behavior, the opposing player may protest to a Head Official or ultimately to the Tournament Committee for a decision.

SECTION XIII. OFFICIATING

A. AHPA Officiating Requirements

1. For sanctioned professional events, AHPA requires officials for every game to ensure proper enforcement of the rules. Amateur events do not require officials, although officials are recommended to ensure proper enforcement of the rules.
2. Any tournament promoter may elect to hire and train professional officials; however, an event may require competitors to also serve as officials in specified conditions as published in individual event policies.
3. An official challenge match for AHPA ranking / rating may be played without an official if both player agree prior to the start of the match and the date, time, and location of the match has been announced at least 24 hours in advance to the *AHPA Challenge Match Committee*.

B. Official's Responsibility

1. *Fair Rule Enforcement*
 - a. Ensure proper use and enforcement of these official rules by players and observers.
 - b. Act as an unbiased observer, ensuring that all games are played in a correct, fair, and sportsmanlike manner.
 - c. Demonstrate no favor or bias for either player/team.
2. *Score Keeping*: Verbally state the score of the game after each point is scored, declare the game count of the set/match after each game is completed, and the set count after each set of a multi-set match, if applicable.

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

3. *Foul Declaration and Discipline:*
 - a. Declare fouls and violations of *Section XI: Player Conduct* when they occur.
 - b. Impose the appropriate penalty for each foul or conduct violation.
 - c. Ensure all Player Rights as outlined in section XII are observed.
 - d. If the official doesn't suspend play immediately after a foul, but his/her voice or gesture interferes with continued play to the point of distraction, *Out of Play* should be declared and the puck should be returned to the player who did not commit the foul.
4. *Face-off Declaration:* At the start of any game or match where a face-off is used, the official will indicate with his/her arm in the direction of the player and announce verbally whom he/she judges to have won the face-off and earned the initial *Possession*.
5. *Restoring Play:* When the game becomes *Out of Play* for any reason, the official will invoke the *In Play Restoration Process* described in section VII.6 to restart play.
6. *Stoppage:*
 - a. Execute *Time Outs* per the Time Out rules outlined in Section VII.B.
 - b. Determine when an injury or emergency has occurred and follow the rules for Injuries and Emergencies as indicated in *Section X: Injuries and Emergencies*.
 - c. Interference: Should any external activity not limited to but including foreign objects entering the playing area and distracting noises from observers or players occur, then the official should stop play, declare *Interference* and award possession per the
 - d. If a puck is spinning on the surface in three dimensions, the official may declare *Out of Play*, permit the player in possession to stop the movement of the puck, and then restore play via the *In Play Restoration Process*.
7. *Time Limitation Suspension:* If a spinning on the surface in three dimensions on one player's side of the table, then the official will suspend the seven-second rule until the puck rests flat.

C. Authority

1. *Core Authority*
 - a. The official has the authority to declare *In Play*, *Time-in*, or *Time-out*, and *Out-of-Play*.
 - b. Official may call an official time-out of a reasonable duration if he agrees that the situation warrants it (i.e. sanding the puck, interference, emergencies).
 - c. He/she also has the authority to declare and enforce penalties as outlined in the *Fouls and Penalties* section of these rules and enforce all the rules of the sport.
2. *Judgment:* The official has the final word on any decision during the game that is in adherence to the rules. He/she may consult eye-witness observers, the players, or the event head officials as needed to collect information needed to determine the proper judgment for a circumstance.
3. *Excessive Force Management:*
 - a. Lifting the mallet from the table and striking the puck is legal. However, if the official can show clear damage to the table, the player causing such damage to the table must cease use of whatever method of play causes it. The official may also at any time

AIR HOCKEY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION: RULES OF PLAY

disallow a technique that he/she deems destructive to property or dangerous to players and/or spectators.

- b. Officials should caution players to desist from striking pucks that are obviously spinning top-like on the table. The official may elect to declare a foul if he/she judges that the player striking the puck used unnecessary or excessive force.

4. *Granting Advantage:*

- a. If a foul occurs and the innocent player plays the puck before the official has time to suspend play and grant him possession of the puck, the official may choose not to call the foul.
- b. In the case of a centerline or topping violation, the official shall not stop play if the innocent player gains immediate possession of the puck.

D. Limitations of Authority and Discipline

1. *Coaching:* The official must never coach a player whom he/she is officiating. Violation of this rule will result in immediate removal and replacement of the official and disciplinary action as outlined in the published event code of conduct.
2. *Player Officiating Requirements:* In an AHPA-sanctioned event having a policy where players must serve as match officials, players who do serve their required officiating duties or who do not provide a substitute official acceptable to the match players when the players are ready, face the possible penalty of conduct warnings and/or more severe penalties at the discretion of the event officials as indicated in the official even policies.