

Handball Rules (Abridged for Curriculum)

While initially when instructing new handball players instructors are encouraged to adapt the rules to fit the situation particular to their facility and players. However at some point rules may come into play. These abridged rules address those situations.

Instructors are encouraged as ask for a free copy of the USHA rulebook by contacting the USHA at (520) 795-0434. They may also be obtained by visiting the web site at www.usahandball.org.

Handball can be played indoors, outdoors, on a glass-walled four-wall or against any smooth surface. Equipment can range from the best in deerskin leather to barehanded using a racquetball or tennis ball.

- Handball can be played by two (singles), three (cutthroat) or four (doubles) players.
- Gloves must be worn when playing with the 'Ace' handball, proper eye protection must always be worn.
- The objective is to win the rally by serving or returning the ball so the opponent is unable to keep the ball in play. A rally is won when one player is unable to reach the opponent's shot before the ball hits the floor twice, or when a player's attempted return fails to reach the front wall before striking the floor.
- Points are scored only by the serving side. When the serving side loses a rally (or two rallies in doubles), it loses the serve, and the receiver becomes the server.
- A match is won by the first side winning two games. The first two games of a match are played to 21 points. If a third game is necessary, it is played to 11 points. A player (team) does not have to win a game by 2 points.
- The receiving team must stand at least 5 feet behind the short line when the serve is attempted. Either partner (when playing doubles or cutthroat) on the receiving team may return the ball. If the receiver makes a legal return, either the server or the server's partner, may return the ball; and so forth.
- If a player hits a ball that hits his/her partner, either going to the front wall or rebounding from the front wall, that team loses the rally. The one exception is when the partner standing in the service box gets hit by a served ball rebounding from the front wall. In this case, the serve is replayed without penalty.

How To Play:

LEGAL SERVE: The server may serve from anyplace with the service zone, and must remain in the service zone until the served ball rebounds past the short line. The service is made by the server bouncing the ball on the floor and then striking the ball so it hits the front wall first and on the rebound, hits the floor behind the short line. After hitting the front wall, the ball may hit one side wall (if playing on three or four wall courts) in the air before hitting the floor.

FAULT SERVE: If a player hits a fault serve, he/she has a second change to make a good serve. Two consecutive faults results in an out (loss of serve). Types of fault serves include:

Short Serve – a serve that rebounds from the front wall and bounces on the floor on or in front of the short line.

Long Serve – a serve that rebound from the front wall and either contacts the back wall (if playing on a four-wall court) or bounces outside of the long line (if playing on a one or three wall court) before hitting the floor.

Three Wall or Ceiling Serve (if playing on a three or four wall court): a serve that hits the front wall and then hits any other walls before hitting the floor.

Foot Fault Serve – the server does not start and complete the serve from within the service zone before the ball rebounds past the short line.

OUT SERVE: Any of the following results in an “out,” (server loses the serve).

Missed Serve – completely missing the ball when attempting the serve

Non-front Serve – the served ball does not strike the front wall first.

Touched Serve – any served ball on the rebound from the front wall that touches the server.

RETURN OF SERVE: The receiver must stand at least 5 feet behind the short line when the ball is served, one of the players on the receiving side must strike the ball either fly or after the first bounce, and before the ball touches the floor a second time. The ball must return to the front wall either directly or after it has touched one or both side walls, the back wall the ceiling or any combination of those surfaces (if playing on a three or four wall court). A returned ball may not strike the floor before hitting the front wall. Failure to make a legal return results in a point for the server.

RALLY: After the return of the serve by the receiver, the server must return the ball to the front wall in the same manner as the receiver. The players alternate in returning the ball until a player is unable to hit the ball before it hits the floor twice, or when the hit ball fails to reach the front wall on the fly.

HINDERS: While attempting to return the ball, the player is entitled to a fair chance to see and return the ball. It is the duty of the player who has just hit the ball to move so as to not interfere with the opponent’s shot attempt. If accidental interference does happen, a “hinder” is called, providing that the player attempting the return had a chance of reaching the ball before it hit the floor twice had the interference not occurred. Whenever a hinder is called the rally is replayed and any previous fault on the server is voided.

BALL HITTING THE OPPONENT: When a player is hit by the ball as it is rebounding from the wall, that player loses the rally. When a player hits the ball and the ball hits the opponent before hitting the front wall, a hinder shall be called if the shot had a chance of reaching the front wall on the fly.

DOUBLES: The server may stand anywhere in the service zone to serve. The server’s partner must stand in one of the service zone boxes until the served ball passes the short line. Each partner on the serving team gets to serve until they lose their serve. When both partners have lost serve, the team is out, and the receiving team gains service. The one exception: only one partner on the teams that begins each game serving is allowed service.