

Rules to Consider

Every league must have rules. In adult leagues, the league board of directors or members must vote on each rule. Rules are adopted by majority vote (one more than half the votes cast). USBC provides sample [Youth](#) and [Adult](#) rules.

League rules do not become official until the first ball of scheduled competition is thrown.

Pay particular attention to rules covering the following items:

Absentee scores (Rule 105)– In leagues, an absentee score is used when a player on the roster is absent from league and a substitute is not obtained. The absentee score shall be the absent member’s current average minus 10 pins, unless otherwise provided by league rule.

Averages (Rule 118c)– A complete and adequate entering average rule is essential for any handicap or classified league. Averages from the previous season are recommended to be used for a bowler’s first night of competition because they are easily verified and they represent the bowler’s true ability. Bowlers who do not have a qualifying average will then establish their average the first session they bowl unless league rules state otherwise.

In youth leagues, a bowler using a two-hand delivery will establish an average with two hands. When the bowler changes to a one-hand delivery, they must establish a new average using that hand. (Rule 118, Item 4)

Legal lineups (Rule 109a)– The minimum legal lineup must be present prior to the completion of the first frame unless the league adopts another frame. The league cannot require the legal lineup to be present at the start of the game. Leagues may adopt a rule allowing one eligible bowler as the legal lineup. Leagues decide whether substitutes count toward a legal lineup. Rule 109a, Item 2 states substitutes count unless league rules specify otherwise.

Playoffs (Rule 113b)– Leagues should adopt a rule stating how a playoff shall be conducted for ties and/or championships.

Some suggestions are:

- ★ Bowl one game (or two games).
- ★ Best two of three games.
- ★ Total pins of a three-game playoff series.
- ★ A point for each game, but none for series.
- ★ Stepladder finals.

Substitutes (Rule 107c)– Every league needs extra players to minimize absentee and vacancy scores. Do this by keeping an ongoing list of substitutes.

Team rosters (Rule 104b)– Leagues specify how many players are allowed on each team’s roster. Team captains submit names before the league starts play or by a time designated by the league.

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Vacancy scores (Rule 105)– teams without full rosters receive a vacancy score.

In adult leagues, unless league rules state otherwise, the vacancy score is 120. Handicap for the vacancy score must be figured by using the same percentage utilized for league averages.

In youth leagues, unless league rules state otherwise, the vacancy score shall be the average of the lowest average bowler on the opposing team's roster. If two or more vacancy scores are required, the average of the next-to-the-lowest bowler on the opposing team's roster shall be used for the second vacancy score. Youth leagues also may set their own vacancy score.

Handicaps

Handicapping is a means of placing bowlers and teams with varying degree of skill on as equitable a basis as possible for their competition against each other. USBC recommends that higher handicap percentages such as 100% be used for more equalized matches. The scratch base that handicap is figured from should be greater than the highest team or individual entering average. For example, if the highest entering individual average is 218, handicap should be 100% of 220.

Another option is to provide a negative handicap for all bowlers with an average above the base figure. For example, 100% handicap of 200, average is 220 bowler receives -20 handicap.

Handicap leagues use their adopted handicap system at all times. Leagues failing to adopt a handicap percentage in their leagues shall use a 100% handicap. (See Rule 100g, Item 1)

Postponements

A league's board of directors, specific committee, or a youth league supervisor/official decides requests for postponements. Leagues must grant postponements for emergencies. Minimize postponement problems by:

- ★ Discussing postponements for special situations such as hunting seasons, holidays or local/national events.
- ★ Allowing extra players on team rosters or keeping a list of roving substitutes.
- ★ Appointing a three-member committee to handle postponement requests and cancellations because of severe weather.

See this handbook's section on League Leadership Duties and Responsibilities for more information on a postponement committee.

Fee Arrearages

You cannot go to the movies and pay afterward. Bowlers should also pay before participating in league play. To encourage prompt payment, leagues can adopt a "No Pay, No Play" rule stating a team forfeits any games when a bowler is present and bowling and not current in paying fees. Be sure to enforce the league arrearage rule consistently throughout the season.

NOTE: Team captains are responsible for collecting fees, but not for paying fees for team members.

Prize/Award Fund

While prize/award funds are important, avoid pricing yourself out of members. Large prize/award funds require larger payments by individual members, and can discourage new members and increase league dropouts.