

# Innertube Water Polo Rules

updated 8/10/2023  
Indicates updated rule or Point of Emphasis.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

1. All participants must meet the eligibility requirements listed in the Intramural Sports Participant Handbook. **Each participant must be a current UVA student or UVA Rec member, and must purchase an Intramural Sports Pass for the semester in which the activity is taking place.** All expired memberships must be updated before the individual may play in any game. Each player must present a valid UVA Student ID or current UVA Rec Membership Card before each contest in order to be eligible to participate. Any games in which an ineligible player signs in will be considered a forfeit.
2. **Teams are responsible for keeping their players and spectators under control.** Misconduct of players, coaches, managers or spectators can result in penalty, ejection or forfeiture of the game. Spectators must also remain within the area designated by the IM Sports staff.
3. Alcoholic beverages, smoking, and pets are prohibited from all intramural contests.
4. IM Sports Officials/Supervisors will have absolute authority during the contest and can make decisions on any matter or question not specifically covered in the rules.
5. Official NFHS (National Federation of State High School Associations) rules will be observed with the following Intramural Sports modifications.

### 1. Team Requirements

A regulation team consists of 5 players (one of which is the goalkeeper), but may play with a minimum of 3 players.

### 2. Equipment

IM Sports Department will provide innertubes and a game ball for each contest. All participants must follow the Aquatic & Fitness Center Pool guidelines in order to participate. Shoes will not be allowed on the pool deck. Billed hats, casts, and/or any other item deemed to be dangerous by the Intramural Supervisor may not be worn during a game. All jewelry is prohibited and will result in dismissal from the pool. Players will not be allowed a replacement until the next opportunity for a legal substitution (see *Section 3*).

### 3. Substitutions

A team must notify the Official of all substitutions. No player may enter the pool without permission of the Official. Teams may substitute under the following conditions:

- a) After a goal, both teams may substitute.
- b) After an out-of-bounds infraction, both teams may substitute.
- c) During a time-out

### 4. Game Length and Timing

Each half will be 15 minutes in length with a continuous running clock. Half-time will be 3 minutes. Teams will change ends at half-time. Any injury time will not be added on at the end of the game. The clock will stop for all injuries.

- a. Each team will be allowed one time-out per half. Time-outs do not carry over to the second half. A time-out may be called by any player whose team is in control of the ball.

*Mercy rule*--if a team is winning by **5 points** or more during the final two minutes, the game will be over.

During the regular season, tie games will stand. During the playoffs, ties will be broken by a shootout (see *Section 7*).

#### A. Shootouts (Playoffs Only)

Five players from each team will be selected by the team to shoot (goalkeepers may be one of the shooters).

Shooters *do not* have to have been in the pool at the end of regulation. However, the goalkeepers *will be* the same as the goalkeepers from the end of regulation. A coin flip will decide which team has the option of shooting first or last. Each team has a total of 5 penalty shots and will alternate each shot. No rebounds are allowed. The thrower must wait for the Official to start the play on each throw. If the score is tied at the end of the first shootout, another shootout will be conducted. During the second shootout, the game is won if, after ANY equal number of shots, the tie is broken. Players who shot in the first round are still eligible to shoot in the second round.

## 5. Game Play

To start each half, both teams line up at opposite ends of the pool until the official drops the ball into the playing area and signals to begin play. On the official's whistle, both teams may propel their innertubes toward the ball. Pushing off the wall to start is legal. The Official blowing their whistle warrants a dead ball (even if inadvertent)

## 6. Fouls and Misconduct

Players may not hold, push, hit, splash, dunk, or tackle any other players with or without the ball. If a player is in control of the ball, the player MAY NOT be touched. *Penalty: Free Throw.*

Each team foul will be recorded.

- a) After each of the first 3 team fouls during a half, a free throw will be taken by the offended player from a point nearest the spot of the violation.
- b) The bonus will go into effect on the fourth team foul of a half. Once in the bonus, the offended team will be awarded a Penalty Shot after every team foul.

Penalty Shots:

- a) Penalty shots shall be taken by the offended player at the 5-meter line (beneath the backstroke flags). No defensive player may be within 3 feet of the shooter.
- b) If the result of the penalty shot is not a goal, the ball remains in play.

A technical foul is a non-contact foul by a player or any behavior deemed by the Official to be unsportsmanlike. A player that receives 2 unsportsmanlike technical fouls in a game will be ejected. For all technical fouls, a penalty shot will be awarded to the offended team. Any player in the pool at the time of the technical foul may shoot the Penalty Shot. For any flagrant, malicious, or violent fouls, the offending player will be ejected and a Penalty Shot will be awarded to the offended team.

## 7. Rules Clarifications

Free throws are awarded for violations from a point nearest the spot of the infraction. During a free throw, the offense has 5 seconds to pass the ball to a teammate. A goal may not be scored from a free throw. The defense must remain at least 3 feet away until the ball is released.

Goal Box Restrictions:

- a) The area that extends five meters from the pool edge and extends the entire width of the playing area is the goal box. This area is marked by the backstroke flags hanging above the pool.
- b) No player other than the goalie may enter the goal box (exception - defensive players may enter their own goal box to retrieve a ball that is out of the goalie's reach). This violation occurs when any part of the player's innertube or body breaks the plane of the backstroke flags.
- c) The backstroke flags are considered in play. Any shot that contacts the flags is still considered legal.

Goalie Restrictions:

- a) The goalie may not leave their tube in an attempt to block a shot from entering the goal. If the shot is unsuccessful, this will result in a Penalty Shot (*see Rule 6.3*) for the offended team.
- b) The goalie may never pass the ball beyond the mid-pool line.
- c) The goalie may not leave the goal box area during play.
- d) Once the goalie gains possession of the ball, they will have 5 seconds to release the ball.

- e) Once the ball has been put back into play, the ball may not be passed back to the Goalie.
- f) After a score, the ball will be put into play by the goalie. The goalie must wait for the Official's whistle to re-start play.

A goal is scored when a legal shot (taken outside the goal box) completely crosses the goal line. If the shot is taken from inside the goal box, the goal is disallowed. A player scoring a goal must remain in their tube until the ball crosses the goal line or the score will be disallowed.

Players dribble the ball by pushing it in the water, holding it between their knees, holding it with two hands, holding it with one hand in the air, holding it against their body, or holding it in their lap. It is illegal to hold the ball completely under the water.

- a) Players may not deliberately hold the ball to delay the game. A player may hold the ball for 5 seconds, at which time they must release control of the ball. At the Official's discretion, a "Delay of Game Warning" will be issued.
- b) Subsequent offenses will result in a "Delay of Game Penalty" and a Free Throw for the offended team.

All players must sit in a horizontal position inside the innertube. If a player falls out of their tube, the player may not attempt to influence the game in any way until they properly return to their tube.

A Free Throw will result when the ball passes out of bounds.

If a goalie deflects a shot, and the ball travels out of bounds, the offense will be awarded a corner throw. The free throw will be conducted from the corner of the pool closest to where the ball exited the field of play and outside of the goal box. A goal may not be scored from a free throw.

There will be no enforcement offside rule.

When two opposing players are both in possession of the ball, the ball will be awarded to the defensive team for a free throw.