

Youth Ruleset Adaptations - Cloth 2026

Introduction

The official ruleset is available on the [WDBF Rules page](#). The following rule adaptations are for implementation at youth dodgeball events at official competition level (for example, national and international competitions).

Adaptation Principles

Rule amendments have been designed to support safety in addition to physical and tactical development. They also seek to simplify officiating at lower levels, promoting accessibility for teachers and non-specialist sports coaches or community leaders as well as young people. They have been rigorously tested at youth events around the world between 2021 and 2026.

Types of Adaptation

The WDBF recognises that each dodgeball event played around the world is different - different intended outcomes, catering to different audiences with different experience levels and abilities. We therefore present three types of adaptations in the following format over two columns:

WDBF	Youth	Competition
Adaptations:		
These are the adaptations that will be used at official WDBF international events.		

Optional	Youth	Competition
Adaptations:		
These are optional adaptations that National Federations and other organising bodies may make to better cater for their audience or meet their intended outcomes.		
Grassroots Adaptations: <i>Further optional adaptations may be made for recreational or grassroots audiences (both youth and adult). These are in italics and outlined in the Grassroots Ruleset Adaptations 2026.</i>		

A matrix of recommended adaptations for varying audiences is presented in [Appendix A](#).

WDBF Age Categories

WDBF Youth Competitions:

- Official WDBF Age Categories are:
 - **U11** - Players who are 11 years old or under on the start date of an event.
 - **U13** - Players who are 13 years old or under on the start date of an event.
 - **U15** - Players who are 15 years old or under on the start date of an event.
 - **U18** - Players who are 18 years old or under on the start date of an event.
 - **Adult** - Players who are 18 years old or over or under on the start date of an event.
- **Minimum Ages:** Players may not compete in age categories which are 2 age categories above their own. For example, a U11 player may compete in u13 and u15 categories, but not u18.

Optional Youth Competition Adjustments:

- National Federations may adjust these age categories for their own events to align to their own objectives. This may include:
 - Using the date of a new year, new academic year or season as the cutoff point for age categorisation.
 - Making small adjustments to age categories (for example, using u12 instead of u11) to ensure competitions can go ahead.

Rule Adaptations Summary

Rules in blue have been adapted in the following section for youth gameplay. Unless specifically mentioned, official cloth rules apply to all age categories.

Part 1: Definitions

Part 2: The Game

Section 1: Facilities and Equipment

Rule 1 Playing Area

Rule 2 Balls

Rule 3 Scoring and Timing Devices

Section 2: Participants

Rule 4 Team

Rule 5 Team Leaders

Rule 6 Uniforms

Rule 7 Player Equipment

Section 3: Playing Formats, Timing, and Scoring

Rule 8 Style of Play

Rule 9 Timing

Rule 10 Scoring

Rule 11 Forfeits

Section 4: Opening Rush

Rule 12 Ball Position

Rule 13 Beginning of Play

Rule 14 False Starts

Section 5: Throwing

Rule 15 Outs

Rule 16 Attempts

Rule 17 Valid and Invalid Attempts

Rule 18 Advantage

Rule 19 Pinching

Section 6: Blocking

Rule 20 Blocking

Rule 21 Disarming

Section 7: Catching

Rule 22 Catching

Section 8: Eliminated Players

Rule 23 Exiting Players

Rule 24 Out Players

Rule 25 Entering Players

Section 9: Boundaries

Rule 26 Out of Bounds

Rule 27 Neutral Zone

Rule 28 Sacrifice Play

Section 10: Simultaneous Play

Rule 29 Simultaneous Play

Section 11: Ball Retrieving

Rule 30 Ball Stealing

Rule 31 Ball Retrievers

Section 12: Violations and Penalties

Rule 32 Penalties

Rule 33 Blue Card

Rule 34 Yellow Card

Rule 35 Red Card

Rule 36 Code of Conduct

Section 13: Challenges

Rule 37 Challenges

Section 14: Injuries

Rule 38 Player Injury

Rule 39 Blood Injury

Part 3: Officials

Section 1: Match Officials

Rule 40 Head Referees

Rule 41 Line Referees

Rule 42 Scorekeeper

Rule 43 Timekeeper

Rule 44 Officials Interference

Section 2: Referee Procedures and Signals

Rule 45 Suspending Play

Rule 46 Timeout

Specific Youth Ruleset Adaptations

Key:

- **U11/U13/U15 Adaptation**
- **All Youth Categories Adaptation**

Rule 1 Playing Area

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

N/A

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Besides the standard court of 18m x 9m (4m neutral zone), the following may be used to support gameplay in smaller venues:
 - Reduced neutral zone court: 16m x 9m (2m neutral zone)
 - No neutral zone court: 14m x 9m (no neutral zone - centre line only)

Grassroots Adaptations:

N/A

Rule 2 Balls

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11 -

- 3 x Size 1 (6" foam) dodgeballs are used - this is a safety adaptation before players progress to use cloth balls in older categories.
- Two balls are placed on outside marking lines for the rush.
- Advantage rules apply with the majority being 2 balls instead of 3 balls.

U13/U15 -

- 5 x Size 2 (6.5" cloth) dodgeballs are used - this supports the development of good throwing technique as players grow.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

N/A

Grassroots Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots balls rule** to support inclusion of new players and those with additional needs:
 - Players may use balls a size down from their usual size.

Rule 5 Team Leaders

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- A team must have a minimum of one adult team leader present at all times. If this team leader leaves courtside (for example, due to sanctions) and another adult cannot take their place, the team will forfeit the match.
- Two adult team leaders are recommended to cover situations such as a youth player requiring urgent medical attention.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

N/A

Grassroots Adaptations:

N/A

Rule 9 Timing

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11 -

- Sets last for a maximum of 2 minutes.
- A match is made up of two halves of 4 sets.

U13 -

- Sets last for a maximum of 2 minutes.
- A match is made up of two halves of 10 minutes.

U15 -

- Sets last for a maximum of 2 minutes.
- A match is made up of two halves of 12 minutes.

U18 -

- Sets last for a maximum of 3 minutes.
- A match is made up of two halves of 15 minutes.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Timing may be adjusted to suit an event's timeline or player's fitness levels.

Grassroots Adaptations:

U13/U15/U18 -

- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots timing rule** for their youth events to support simplified timings:
 - Matches may consist of a determined number of sets (for example, two halves of 6 sets) rather than a running clock.

Rule 14 False Starts

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11 -

- Teams are provided with one warning for their first false start offence in a half, where balls are reset and the rush begins again. For any subsequent false starts during that half, the team forfeits all balls to the opposing team.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

N/A

Grassroots Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots false start rule** for their youth events to support less impactful false starts:
 - Teams are provided with one warning for their first false start offence in a half, where balls are reset and the rush begins again. For any subsequent false starts during that half, the team forfeits all balls to the opposing team.

Rule 15 Outs

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11 -

- Players are not eliminated if they are hit in the face by a ball, unless they are ducking down and in movement when struck.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

U13/U15 -

- *Players are not eliminated if they are hit in the face by a ball, unless they are ducking down and in movement when struck.*

Grassroots Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots outs rule** to keep players on court:
 - *Players are not out when eliminated from the game, instead giving one point to the opposing team. The team with the most points at the end of the set wins.*
- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots faceshot rule** to disincentivise faceshots:
 - *Players are not eliminated if they are hit in the face by a ball, unless they are ducking down and in movement when struck.*

Rule 17 Valid and Invalid Attempts

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11/U13/U15 -

- A player will receive one warning per match for an invalid attempt, as long as the invalid attempt in question is not unsportsmanlike (for example, making an egregious invalid attempt during the last 30 seconds of a close match). Players will be called out for any subsequent invalid attempts.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

U13/U15 -

- Players may only be given an invalid attempt sanction if the referee deems them to be intentionally missing their target. A player who has shown they cannot yet throw the ball far enough to reach opponents is not sanctioned.

Grassroots Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots valid attempts rule** to ensure players are only sanctioned if they are making invalid attempts on purpose:
 - *Players may only be given an invalid attempt sanction if the referee deems them to be intentionally missing their target.*

Rule 28 Sacrifice Play

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11/U13/U15 -

- A player who successfully completes a sacrifice play is rendered out the moment they go out of bounds and may not return to their fair territory to continue playing. This adaptation is designed to reduce collision risk, simplify officiating, and avoid repeated high-risk actions by younger players

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

U18 -

- A player who successfully completes a sacrifice play is rendered out the moment they go out of bounds and may not return to their fair territory to continue playing.

Grassroots Adaptations:

All Youth Categories -

- Event organisers may choose to implement the **Grassroots sacrifice play rule** to reduce the opportunity of collisions between opponents:
 - A player who successfully completes a sacrifice play is rendered out the moment they go out of bounds and may not return to their fair territory to continue playing.

Rule 34 Yellow Card

WDBF Youth Competition Adaptations:

U11 -

- A yellow card lasts for the remainder of the current set plus the next two sets.

Optional Youth Competition Adaptations:

N/A

Grassroots Adaptations:

N/A

Appendix A

Suggested Adaptations for Various Events

	WDBF Youth Competition	National Youth League	School Competition	Beginner Festival	Inclusion Event
Playing Area	N/A - Use official court (18m x 9m)	Official court (18m x 9m) or smaller court (16m x 9m) to fit in smaller venues	Small court (16m x 9m) or no neutral zone court (14m x 9m) to fit school venues	No neutral zone court (14m x 9m) for simplicity	No neutral zone court (14m x 9m) for simplicity
Balls	U11 - 3x Size 1 foam dodgeballs U13/U15 - 5 x Size 2 cloth dodgeballs	U11 - 3x Size 1 foam dodgeballs U13/U15 - 5 x Size 2 cloth dodgeballs	U11 - 3x Size 1 foam dodgeballs U13/U15 - 5 x Size 2 cloth dodgeballs	U11 - 3x Size 1 foam dodgeballs U13/U15 - 5 x Size 2 cloth dodgeballs	U11/U13/U15 - 3x Size 1 foam dodgeballs
Team Leaders	Each team must have an adult team leader	Each team must have an adult team leader	Each team must have an adult team leader	Each team must have an adult team leader	Each team must have an adult team leader
Timing	U11 - 8 x 2m sets U13 - 10m halves, 2m sets U15 - 12m halves, 2m sets U18 - 15m halves, 3m sets	Use WDBF competition timings, but may be shortened to fit event timings	U11 - 8 x 2m sets U13 - 8 x 2m sets U15 - 10 x 2m sets U18 - 10 x 3m sets May be shortened to fit event timings	U11 - 8 x 2m sets U13 - 8 x 2m sets U15 - 10 x 2m sets U18 - 10 x 3m sets May be shortened to fit event timings	All ages - 6 x 2m sets May be shortened or lengthened to fit event timings
False Starts	U11 - one warning per half before forfeiting balls to opposition	U11 - one warning per half before forfeiting balls to opposition	U11/U13/U15 - one warning per half before forfeiting balls to opposition	All ages - one warning per half before forfeiting balls to opposition	All ages - one warning per half before forfeiting balls to opposition
Outs	U11 - players not out if hit in the face.	U11 - players not out if hit in the face.	All ages - players not out if hit in the face.	All ages - use points instead of eliminations. Players not out if hit in the face.	All ages - use points instead of eliminations. Players not out if hit in the face.
Valid & Invalid Attempts	U11/U13/U15 - players receive one warning per match before being sanctioned for invalid attempts	U11/U13/U15 - players receive one warning per match before being sanctioned for invalid attempts	U11/U13/U15 - players only sanctioned for intentional invalid attempts after one warning	U11/U13/U15 - players only sanctioned for intentional invalid attempts after one warning	U11/U13/U15 - players only sanctioned for intentional invalid attempts after one warning
Sacrifice Play	U11/U13/U15 - players are out even after a successful leap of faith	U11/U13/U15 - players are out even after a successful leap of faith	All ages - players are out even after a successful leap of faith	All ages - players are out even after a successful leap of faith	All ages - players are out even after a successful leap of faith
Yellow Card	U11 - yellow card lasts for current set + next 2 sets	All ages - Adjust timings to suit event timings	All ages - Adjust timings to suit event timings	All ages - Adjust timings to suit event timings	All ages - Adjust timings to suit event timings

This table shows suggested ruleset adaptations to be used in a range of event environments. The adaptations used are ultimately at the discretion of the event organiser and should be announced clearly in event regulations literature.