

2025-26 and 2026-27 Women's Basketball Rules Changes

Each changed or altered segment is identified in the rules text by a blue-shaded background.

Uniforms - Game Jerseys and Shorts. (Rule 1-22.11). Deletes the requirement that the game jersey be tucked into the game shorts.

Supplemental Apparel. (Rule 1-23.4). Permits headbands not wider than 4 inches.

Supplemental Apparel. (Rule 1-23.7). Requires undergarments and knee/leg sleeves to be the same legal color.

Duties of the Shot-Clock Operator. (Rule 2-11.6.d.6 through .8). The shot clock will be set to 20 seconds when, following a dead-ball change of team control, a team is awarded the ball for a throw-in in their frontcourt.

Ball Caused to Go Out of Bounds. (Rule 7-2.3). Penalizes bench personnel who physically assist the player with the ball by intentionally keeping them from going out of bounds or by physically assisting them to move in a direction the coach wants them to go.

Traveling. (Rules 9-5.4.a.3, 9-5.4.b.2, and 4-19). Permits a player executing a jump stop to land on both feet at approximately the same time.

Personal Fouls. (Rule 10-10.5.c). Deletes the prohibition of multiple touches with one hand (see Appendix II, Section 3, 2.b).

Technical Fouls. (Rules 10-12.3.a.6 and .7). Having more than five players legally participating in the game and excessive timeouts are now team technical fouls.

Flagrant 2 Fouls. (Rule 10-14). Requires a one-game suspension for an individual who failed to serve a mandatory rule-based suspension. The individual's head coach is also suspended for one game when the individual who was supposed to serve a suspension fails to do so.

Replay. (Rule 11-3.2 and 11-4.1.m). Permits coaches to appeal the following rulings: (1) an out-of-bounds violation by the officials, (2) a backcourt violation, (3) whether team control changed before a ruled foul only if it could affect the awarding of free throws, and (4) whether the foul was charged to the correct individual. Officials are prohibited from using replay on their own for (1) through (3).

Experimental Rule. For 2025-26 exhibition games only, and by mutual agreement of the competing institutions, coaches are permitted to appeal a foul charged to their own team at any time during the contest. There is no limit to the number of appeals a coach may initiate and the appeal must be made before the ball becomes live following the ruling of the foul. Unsuccessful appeals result in a

charged timeout to the team. Teams may appeal even when they have no timeouts remaining; however, when a team with no timeouts remaining loses an appeal, they are assessed a technical foul for an excessive timeout.

The NCAA Women's Basketball Rules Committee requests that institutions utilizing this experimental rule provide feedback to the committee. Questions concerning the experimental rule should be addressed to women's basketball secretary-rules editor Jon Levinson (201-693-7705 or jonlevinson@icloud.com).

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

In each edition of the NCAA Women's Basketball Rules Book, several areas are given special attention. These are identified as points of emphasis. While they may not represent any rules changes, their importance must not be overlooked. In some cases, the points of emphasis are more critical than some of the rules changes. For example, when a topic is included in the points of emphasis, there has been evidence during the previous year(s) that there has been inconsistency in administering these areas.

The Rules Committee has identified the following as significant concerns that need to be addressed because of their increased occurrence. They are not listed in order of importance; they are all important.

Enforcing the Rules as Written

Enforcing the rules as written is again a point of emphasis. The rules committee wants to ensure that officials, coaches, players, administrators, coordinators, and conference focus on the playing rules as found in the rules book and to support officials in their enforcement of all playing rules. When the playing rules are enforced as written, it leads itself to consistency from game to game, division to division, and region to region. The playing rules are designed to create a balance of play, equally favorable conditions for both the offense and the defense, and provide reasonable safety protection for players; without the consistency in the application of the rules, the balance the rules committee seeks to provide through the playing rules is not accomplished.

Officials are tasked with ensuring that the competing teams play within the rules because the rules basically guarantee fair play to the end that no player and neither team gains an unfair advantage over an opponent. When officials do not enforce the playing rules, it impacts the purpose of the playing rules. There is no room for personal philosophies or using "game management" to ignore enforcing a playing rule. Likewise, the enforcement of a playing rule is never a "game interrupter". Coaches should continue to familiarize themselves with the rules and teach the rules to their players; when players know what is legal or illegal, it reduces the number of stoppages for illegal acts and makes for a more enjoyable game. Except when a waiver is issued by the rules committee, no one has the authority to set aside a playing rule or interpretation.

Screening

Knowing what constitutes a legal screen is imperative. Screeners must establish a legal position without causing contact. Delaying or preventing a player from reaching a desired position is the purpose of a screen and while contact will most likely occur, the screener cannot cause the contact. Following a legal