

Rules Policy

Presented for approval to the Board of Directors by the SOAR Committee
Approved by Board of Directors, July 23, 2018

This policy outlines the guiding philosophy and the process by which the Official Rules of Ultimate will be maintained and revised over time.

A. Guiding Philosophy

- a. The guiding philosophy for how the sport of ultimate is played is called “Spirit of the Game” (SOTG). This philosophy must be defined in the official rules and its principles integrated into not only the rules themselves but into all materials governing the game. While the exact language defining SOTG may be revised over time, certain key principles should remain that focus on both developing and highlighting the character of players. Such principles include personal responsibility and respect for others and for the rules of the game.
- b. In order to preserve key character-focused principles, player-officiating will be maintained as a mechanism in the rules that both requires and highlights SOTG. While third party officiating may have a role in some playing environments, its implementation should always support SOTG and player-officiating, even as it addresses other elements of the playing experience.
- c. The rules of the sport should focus on creating a safe, fun, and fair environment at all levels.
- d. Adaptations of the rules should be developed and maintained as needed to address different variations of the sport, levels of play, and formats for play. It is important that variations to the core principles and rules of play are minimized, in order to create a clear and consistent general understanding of the sport. Variations should only be created and implemented to address important developmental, safety, or format-related issues.
- e. Regular feedback from key constituents, including players, coaches, organizers, and other members of the community is key to ensuring that the rules of the game are clearly understood and are responsive to new ideas for improving the game.

B. Rules Revision Process

- a. As outlined in the USA Ultimate Bylaws, the Board of Directors is responsible for approving any changes to the Official Rules of Ultimate.
- b. The Board’s Spirit, Officiating, and Rules Committee is responsible for recommending rules changes to the Board and for overseeing all aspects of rules creation, education, and implementation. Its constituent sub-working groups, the Spirit, Observer, and Rules working groups are the primary contributors to this work, and are required to interact with one another in order to integrate their key areas of focus into decisions about how the sport is played.

- c. The Official Rules of Ultimate shall be reviewed and revised on a two-year cycle. Editions of the rules will be named for the two year period for which they are to apply to official competition (e.g. "2019-2020 Official Rules of Ultimate"). The new rule set will take effect in January.
- d. Rule change recommendations will be presented by the SOAR Committee to the Board of Directors. Any edits suggested by the Board to the recommended changes must be sent back to the SOAR Committee for review to ensure internal consistency within the rules. Rule changes approved by the Board will be incorporated by the SOAR Committee into the next edition of the Official Rules of Ultimate.
- e. All rules changes must be presented to the community for feedback prior to being recommended to the Board of Directors. The feedback period must be at least 4 weeks long. Feedback must be considered by SOAR prior to recommending rule changes. A feedback report must be made available to the Board of Directors along with the any recommendation.
- f. The current Official Rules of Ultimate will be utilized for USA Ultimate sanctioned competition, unless otherwise approved by SOAR.
- g. Rules experimentation and testing may take place as approved or directed by SOAR, coordinated by USA Ultimate staff and local partners. Feedback gathered from rules testing will be reviewed and considered by SOAR. Major rules changes should be tested at experimental events prior to being recommended. Minor rules changes or language clarifications may or may not be tested, but must still be presented to the community for feedback.
- h. SOAR will consider consistency with the World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF) Official Rules of Ultimate for international play when assessing rules change recommendations.
- i. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the USA Ultimate Board reserves the right to make immediate changes to the rules to the extent it deems necessary for the mission of the organization.

C. Rules Education

- a. SOAR is responsible for ensuring the development and distribution of educational materials and procedures related to SOTG, officiating, and rules.