



GUIDE TO

# WALKING HOCKEY

IT'S HOCKEY...BUT WALKING!

Stay active, whatever your age, health or ability.  
Field hockey is a sport for life!



★ AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL





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# FORWARD

This guide has been written in collaboration with Bromsgrove Hockey Club and England Hockey. USA Field Hockey would like to thank them, and in particular, Alan Gormley, for introducing and sharing Walking Hockey with us, your friends across the pond, at the 2018 Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup in London.

As a hockey lover - it's only called "field hockey" in the United States and Canada - it's exciting to share this new version of the sport. Walking Hockey is a fun and healthy recreational activity that can enable more people of all ages to play field hockey.

In the United States, there's a misconception among many that field hockey is a sport just for school-aged girls. Many adults, especially men, have never had the opportunity to try field hockey. Furthermore, in America, parents, friends and family members are more often spectators to kids' sports than active participants. Now is the time for change.

The USA Field Hockey American Development Model (ADM) is a framework to grow the game and inspire a lifelong love of field hockey. The goal is to get more people into the game earlier and encourage them to stick with it longer as players, coaches, umpires and fans. Field hockey is fun for everyone. Those who have played but don't currently are encouraged to get back into the game. Those who have never played are encouraged to give it a try. USA Field Hockey's hope is that Walking Hockey will help more men and women, boys and girls, get into the game and fall in love with the sport.

This guide introduces Walking Hockey as another fun way for people of all ages to stay active and fit through field hockey. It provides information and advice on a wide range of topics including the benefits of offering sessions, who might be interested in attending, ideas on marketing and promotion, and considerations for when sessions should take place and what they should look like. It will also provide basic rules for game play. Walking Hockey is a perfect way to get siblings, friends, parents and grandparents of school and club players off the sidelines and onto the field. It's never too late to pick up a stick, or a whistle, and fall in love with fieldhockey.

Enjoy Walking Hockey! And thank you again to Alan Gormley and England Hockey for sharing this fun game with USA Field Hockey.

# INTRODUCING WALKING HOCKEY

Walking Hockey is a modified game of field hockey in which players walk instead of run.

Increasing in popularity throughout the world, Walking Hockey is perfect for players who are looking for a less physically demanding version of the game but still enjoy showing their skills and being involved in the team and social aspect. It's also perfect for players brand new to the game who may be more comfortable in a less competitive format and those who prefer walking to running for whatever reason.

Walking Hockey is exactly as the name suggests - you play hockey while walking. It's designed to help people keep an active lifestyle regardless of age, health and ability, as well as getting individuals back into the sport who had to stop due to injuries or other reasons. Most importantly, it's fun.

In addition to the health benefits associated with most forms of physical activity; keeping fit, staying active, weight loss, etc., there are also many social health benefits that come with playing Walking Hockey. Taking time to socialize, meet new people or even build confidence are all part and parcel of taking part in this version of the game.

Bromsgrove Hockey Club in England was the first club to offer Walking Hockey. Now it's being played throughout the world. Walking Hockey opportunities will be provided at upcoming USA Field Hockey events. Clubs, schools, recreational departments, and all interested are encouraged to give Walking Hockey a try. Share your experience and photos with USA Field Hockey by sending them to [sportdevelopment@usafielddhockey.com](mailto:sportdevelopment@usafielddhockey.com).

## SIMPLE RULES FOR WALKING HOCKEY

The game should be as true to field hockey as possible. Here are a few pointers to get you started, but you can adapt them to suit your group. The full rules are at the end of this guide.

- Players must walk, no running! One heel must be on the ground at all times.
- No hitting is permitted! Players may only push or slap the ball.
- Adapt the field to suit the number of players and their level of experience and ability.
- Play small-sided game (4v4, 5v5, 6v6... whatever best suits the number of players and facilities available).
- Use a larger, lighter ball if desired, such as USA Field Hockey's GO Ball. These are available to purchase online at [usafielddhockey.com](http://usafielddhockey.com). Other balls are also acceptable and can be used based on what works best on your surface type and for your players .
- Goals can be scored from anywhere on the field. You may want to introduce scoring areas to make the game more challenging and to prevent stronger players from pushing the ball from too far away.
- A goal is awarded if a player prevents the ball from entering the goal with any part of their body.
- At a restart, the opposition must be at least 3 yards from the ball.
- Physical contact between players is not permitted.
- There are no goalkeeper or penalty corners in Walking Hockey.
- If the ball hits a player's foot, a foul will only be awarded if an unfair advantage is gained.





## EQUIPMENT

Equipment needs are minimal: field hockey sticks, balls, cones or markers, or goals. However, the following equipment may further improve the players' experience.

- Using larger, lighter balls, such as GO Balls, can make the game more enjoyable and reduce the need to wear shin guards.
- Have a few extra-long sticks for those players who might have restricted mobility. If you'd like to purchase some long, inexpensive sticks, please go to [usafielddhockey.com](http://usafielddhockey.com).
- Smaller goals are used for Walking Hockey. Use GO Goals, cones or other markers.
- Mouthguards and shin guards are optional.

## SESSION STRUCTURE

The overview of a typical session can look like this:

### Warm-Up

Have players walk across the field and back passing the ball to each other. Encourage participants to include all players each time and emphasize the social aspect of the sessions.



## Game Based Activities

Players attend because they want to play field hockey, have lots of touches on the ball and get some exercise. Use the USA Field Hockey GO Cards or Let's Play for some fun warm-up games and activities for all ages.

## Games

Keep games small-sided (4v4, 5v5, 6v6) so players get lots of touches on the ball and are constantly involved. Ensure the teams are balanced and rotate positions regularly. You may prefer using a larger, softer ball, such as a GO Ball, or you may prefer a standard hockey ball or another ball.

## Post Session Social

People will attend Walking Hockey because it's fun, social and a good opportunity to meet new friends - so make sure you try to deliver on this! Can you schedule a post-game get together in a local restaurant? Let players know about this beforehand so they can make suitable arrangements.



# PLANNING AND DELIVERING SESSIONS

## WHERE AND WHEN TO RUN SESSIONS

The most ideal time for Walking Hockey sessions is when a club or school is active and others are also training/playing. The obvious benefit is that this will help integrate the sessions and members. Other advantages include:

- It will be easier to recruit volunteers for Walking Hockey sessions if they or their children are training/playing immediately before, during or after your session.
- You can minimize field rental fees if you share field space with other training sessions.
- If the sessions take place before or alongside a club or school practice, those players who might be interested can get a feel for the game.

## FORMAT/ADAPTATIONS

The premise of Walking Hockey is a simple:

- players can only walk
- players do what they can manage
- sessions are about enjoyment as opposed to competition

Deliver sessions based around the games, not drills, with the only difference being that walking is encouraged as opposed to running. The philosophy when it comes to coaching Walking Hockey players is to facilitate the sessions so that participants develop their skills and find out what works best for them.

One important factor to think about when delivering Walking Hockey sessions is the numbers of players and the space required. Again, be flexible. Try using a 25 yard by 30-yard field and either 4v4 or 5v5 players per side.

Refer to the rules at the end of this guide for an official Walking Hockey field diagram.

## INTEGRATING PLAYERS IN YOUR PROGRAM

**Clubs** – It’s important to consider your Walking Hockey players as members of the club. Consider low rates for them to join as full members.

Also, encourage Walking Hockey players to get involved in hockey practices and other roles within the club. Roles could include committee positions, umpiring, coaching, or other volunteer opportunities.

**Schools** – Walking Hockey is a great way to engage others in your program. Try a parent-child, bring a teacher or bring a friend Walking Hockey playday to increase awareness and interest in field hockey.

**Recreational Programs** – Walking Hockey could be a stand alone program targeted to adults or it could be an added event to an existing field hockey program.



# BENEFITS OF WALKING HOCKEY

**Clubs offering Walking Hockey have already found a wealth of benefits for doing so. These include:**

- **New Members** – Walking Hockey may appeal to players who are new to the sport or who are unable to take part in mainstream field hockey.
- **Member Retention** – Walking Hockey gives those that do play the opportunity to play for many more years, even when running may no longer be possible or appealing.
- **Increased Revenue** – Introducing Walking Hockey may help grow your program and expand your current offerings, thus generating additional revenue.
- **Greater Publicity** – By promoting suitable sessions to new or returning players and gaining positive attention, clubs can raise their profile in the local community.
- **Social Offering** – Walking Hockey enables larger social groups and families (and generations) to play together in a fun and friendly environment.



- **Additional Volunteers** – With more individuals within the club trying and playing field hockey, the pool of potential volunteers increases, and more may become engaged in the sport.
- **Maximum Field Usage** – By thinking practically about the space available in existing facility rental, many clubs have found they don't need to book additional spaces and therefore get greater value for money.
- **More Players** – While many players start with Walking Hockey, over time some players may get hooked and choose to play regular field hockey.
- **More Engaged and Informed Parents, Grandparents and Fans** – Walking Hockey provides a perfect introduction to the sport and can be a fun activity for parents and grandparents to try field hockey themselves, and to play with their loved ones. Try a parent-child or sibling playday! Or challenge another sports team to play.



# PREPARING FOR SESSIONS

**Before you start to offer Walking Hockey you need to consider the following:**

## Program Analysis

Do any of your members/players have an affinity with the Walking Hockey target group?

Are they willing to contribute to setting up the sessions? By providing advice and support or being more hands on?

Is the club committee and/or school administration on board with the idea, ensuring all contribute to making the sessions a success?

Are there enough volunteers internally to manage the sessions safely, or do you need to look externally?

On what days and times is the field available? Could part of the field be used for Walking Hockey while the other side of the field is used for other play?

## Area Analysis

Research your local market to see if there is a need or interest for Walking Hockey. Does the marketing drive a new audience to you that doesn't know they want to play Walking Hockey until they find out about it?

Is there another club or school in your area that might be interested in offering Walking Hockey or plan to start this? What are their experiences? If there's a nearby club, perhaps there's an opportunity to develop a partnership or a challenge match.

Are there other organizations in the area that might want to offer Walking activities? What similar sports do they offer and what are their experiences?

What is the community policy in respect to the target audience? What support is available locally for new activities such as Walking Hockey?

## Financial Analysis

Do you have to pay for the venue?

Do you need to pay coaches or will they volunteer?

Can you get old equipment to loan to players?

Do you have money available to offer this for free or do you need funding?

Will you charge participants for training/membership fees?

Can you get funding from any local schools, government bodies or local multi-sport organizations?

Setting up Walking Hockey sessions should not be expensive. However, be sure to come up with a project cost model that is attractive and affordable for participants.

These are some items you might need as you set up your sessions:

- Promotional materials.
- Field hockey sticks - have a few long ones available if possible.
- Balls – any type of ball is acceptable. It does not need to be a real field hockey ball. Try a GO Ball. They are larger, lighter, and roll well on any surface. They are available at [usafielddhockey.com](http://usafielddhockey.com).
- A field hockey pitch or appropriate space such as a tennis court, basketball court, parking lot, roller hockey court...any flat space will do.
- Pinnies to differentiate teams.
- First Aid equipment as a precaution.
- Helpers to facilitate the session.



## Generating Support for the Club

It's important that you have support for your activity. This can be done by putting Walking Hockey on the agenda of your next meeting or communicating with members/administration through your usual communication channels (email, website, Facebook, newsletters, twitter, etc.).

Outline the benefits to your club or school. Good information to all members and players and other key people is important to boost the success of the sessions and to ensure Walking Hockey becomes integrated into your programming.

If possible, establish a working group of people who are committed to setting up Walking Hockey and who are responsible for making it happen. Ask around so you can access a variety of skills. Hopefully you will find a lot of people who are enthusiastic about the project.

## Target Groups

The next step is to understand who Walking Hockey sessions would appeal to. This might be:

- Former players who had given up hockey due to age and/or injury
- Parents, grandparents, friends or siblings of existing club or school players
- People who had never played the sport before but are interested in learning how to play



- People looking for a gentle sport to help with recovery from illness or injury
- People who haven't played the sport for years who might be attracted to a new angle on a sport they previously enjoyed
- Older people who are looking for a walking sport
- People with New Year resolutions involving fitness or weight loss for example
- Current members who want to play a little more and benefit for more "time and space"
- Families who currently can't make sessions due to childcare – Walking Hockey is suitable for youngsters too so the whole family can play

You may decide you want to target all or some of the above types of players. This is entirely up to you, based on your community and the resources you have available. For each profile, begin to think about where you might find them, what they would like to achieve during the sessions and how you can integrate them further into the club.

### Why the Type of Coach or Volunteer is Important

For this target audience, individuals with good people skills, who are welcoming and engaging, are most important. Having a coach who can relate and communicate with participants in a relaxed and friendly way is essential. A sense of humor helps too.

Remember that the Walking Hockey participants will have a vast range of expectations and will almost certainly be nervous and/or apprehensive. The small things like greeting them individually and creating sessions that are relaxed but well organized can make all the difference to their experience.

If players have a great experience not only will they come back again, but they are likely to tell their friends and family as well.

### Insurance

Insurance is critical for any activity. Program leaders must protect themselves and their athletes. Have each player sign a waiver. USA Field Hockey can provide Memberships that include insurance at a very reasonable price.

# PROMOTING SESSIONS

Once your sessions are set up, promotion is vital to ensure they are well attended. When trying to recruit players for your sessions, focus on people within and around your local community - they are your biggest audience and they are going to be the ones most likely to come to your sessions!

Give yourselves a good amount of time (at least 3-4 weeks) to promote the sessions before you begin.

When talking about your sessions, keep your message really simple as to why they should attend. Focus on:

- Keeping active
- Meeting new people
- Having fun

## HOW AND WHERE TO PROMOTE YOUR SESSION

**There are several ways to promote your session:**

### Local Newspapers and Magazines

Send a press release to your local papers briefing them on your program and playing opportunities. Also, invite members of the paper to come and play.

## Posters

Put posters or flyers up in and around your local community. When going in to speak about putting a poster up, tell them all about your sessions and ask them to promote it to their customers, friends, family and members. Here are some examples of where you may be able to put your flyers:

- Community notice boards - grocery stores and coffee shops
- Churches and Temples
- Public Libraries
- Doctors' Offices
- Convenience Shops
- Local Health or Recreational Departments
- YMCAs or Boys and Girls Clubs
- Restaurants and Bars - great place for a social after a session
- Schools - lots of parents/grandparents dropping their kids off
- Senior Centers



## Radio

Approach local radio stations and utilize any contacts you have. Don't forget to invite the presenter and show support staff down to a session.

Think about local community groups who have a similar target audience as you or who would also be interested in or benefit from attending your sessions.

## Online

**Using the Internet is a great tool to help promote your Walking Hockey sessions - there are some simple steps to take to have the greatest effect.**

Update your club, school or team website - make sure you are promoting your Walking Hockey sessions on your website - news stories, pictures. And again, focus on the key messages; keeping active, meeting new people, and social and relaxed fun sessions.

Does your club, school or team have social media accounts? If so, utilize these to promote Walking Hockey. Posting images is a great way to catch people's attention and to give whoever is reading a call to action. What should they do after looking at the post, e.g. get in contact with, register, etc.

Use online groups on social media. Get your message out to them!

Remember the same rule applies online as it does with your posters – your audience is still your local community and the surrounding areas. So when it comes to posting into groups such as baby and child groups, weightwatchers and your local authority, find the ones nearest to your hockey club, school or facility.

Use your existing members to help spread the word online! Ask them to share and retweet posts that you have posted. They can change their profile and header pictures too. Every little bit helps!

## Word of Mouth

Make the most of your current members and player – use them to get the word out there about your Walking Hockey sessions! If you have 20 players, and they tell five friends, colleagues or family members, that’s already 100 new people reached. It’s as easy as that.

Don’t just think of word of mouth as verbally telling someone about the sessions. They could pass on posters or flyers, share images over social media and even send an email to their address book.

Don’t underestimate the power of word of mouth. It’s easy and FREE. Surveys show that friend recommendations are one of the most powerful and persuasive forms of advertising.

Once your sessions have started, encourage players to bring a friend, parent, sibling or child to the next session.



# EVALUATION & CONTINUATION

Once you get into the swing of your Walking Hockey sessions, the challenge is to keep improving them in order to keep members and expand membership. A number of items worth evaluating are:

- Did the attendees have fun?
- Do you adapt the session to the needs of the individual?
- Are you prepared to change the session if it's not working?
- Are your coaches/volunteers in the right roles?
- Do you regularly communicate with your players?
- Do you receive regular feedback from your players?
- Are you promoting the session in the right places? And frequently enough?
- Do you need any additional specialized equipment for any of your members?
- Does your session structure and game format suit your members?
- Do you need more volunteers or coaches?
- Are you still promoting Walking Hockey within the club?
- If some of your members have stopped attending, have you asked why?

## WHAT NEXT?

Your Walking Hockey session can become a staple in what you offer to the community. However, over time you may find some of your players may want to play Walking Hockey against other groups or clubs. This is great news!

Reach out to other local teams or clubs and challenge them to a game. Encourage and support other groups in the introduction and set up of activities.

You may decide to invite a local club along to play against or host a mini Walking Hockey Festival. Just remember why the players attend and what they enjoy most about the sessions and ensure this carries over to deliver the best experience.

We hope you find this guide useful as you look to set up and offer Walking Hockey sessions at your club or school.

Share how Walking Hockey is going in your community! USA Field Hockey would like to keep in touch and create a network so we can all support each other in growing the game.



# WALKING HOCKEY RULES

*Updated March 2019*

## THE RULES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

The rules are the appropriate rules of 11-a-side field hockey except for the following:

- All players are restricted to walking, meaning that when in motion at least one foot must be touching the field at all times.
- The ball must stay below knee height.
- The stick must remain below waist height.
- Only pushing or slapping of the ball is allowed.
- There will be no hitting of the ball.
- There will be no physical contact.
- In low-level/recreational competitions and social sessions there is leniency on feet and back of stick use until people become comfortable with the game.
- If the ball gets accidentally raised (squeezed) it must drop to the field before it can be played.

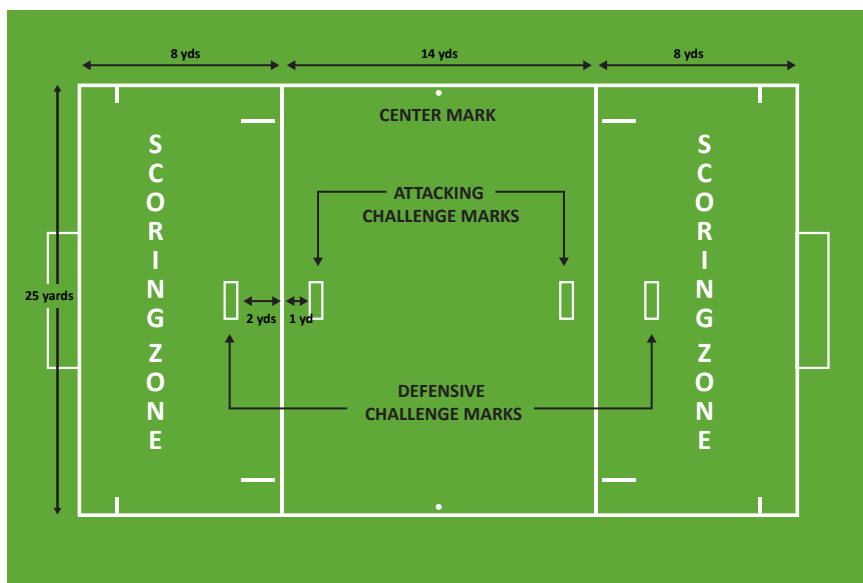


## Player Numbers and Field Dimensions

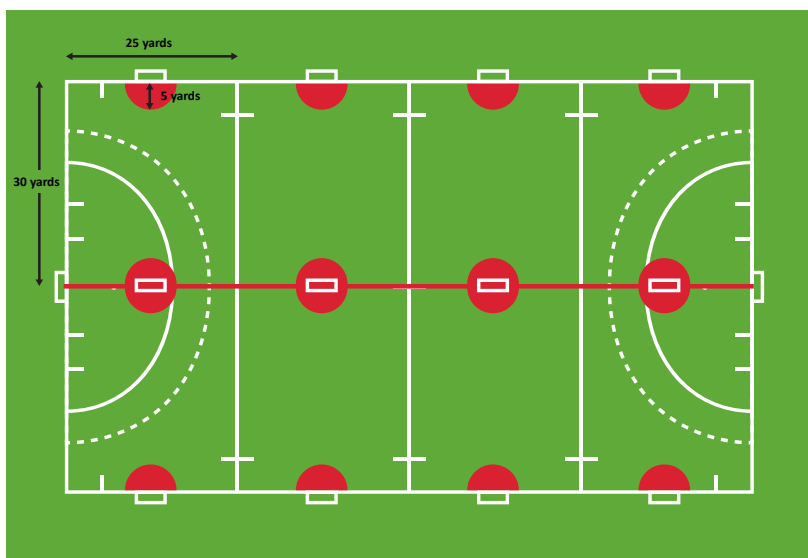
- As a guideline, this is a five-a-side or 5v5 game. However, team size can be varied to allow as many people as possible to get an enjoyable experience. For example, if you have 16 players it is better to play two, four-a-side matches than one, eight-a-side match. This allows more touches of the ball.
  - No goalkeepers or kickbacks are permitted.
  - The format can be single-gender or mixed.
- The playing area will measure 25 yards wide by 30 yards long. Again, this can be varied to meet the number of players or the available space.

## Field Markings

- Scoring Zone lines can be marked using chalk, cones or throw-down markers. Each line is recommended to consist of markers on each side with a different colored single marker (if available) to denote the middle of the field. The Challenge markers should be in line with the central marker and the appropriate distance either side of the Scoring Zone line.
- Side lines are the existing lines of the field if available or throw down markers.



The following diagram demonstrates how to set up eight games on a single field, accommodating 64-80 players at a time.



## Scoring

At each end, there will be a 'Scoring Zone' 8 yards from the baseline of the field and running across the full width of the field. Goals may only be scored from within this zone. The normal rules affecting play in an eleven-a-side field 'D' or circle apply in this zone unless otherwise stated.

Shots cannot be lifted and only count if they cross the goal line below knee height.

## Restarts, Corners and Free-Hits

1. Play starts with one team having a free hit at the center of the field. The other team starts with possession in the next half. All players should be on their half of the field until the ball is played. In the case of any free-hit or restart being awarded, all players should be at least 3 yards away from the ball carrier.
  - a. Defenders caught within 3 yards are not allowed to interfere with play until the ball has traveled 3 yards.

- b. The ball must be moved 3 yards before a shot is taken. In the event of a free-hit within 3 yards of the Scoring Zone the ball must move 3 yards before it can enter the Scoring Zone.
2. Clearance – (equivalent of a 16-yard hit) – If the ball has traveled over the baseline and was last hit by the attacking team, play restarts with the defending team in possession on the Scoring Zone line, in-line with where the ball went out of play.
3. Corner – (equivalent of a long corner) – If the ball has been unintentionally hit over the baseline by the defending team, play restarts with the attacking team in possession on the Scoring Zone line in-line with where the ball went out of play.
  - a. The ball must be moved 3 yards before it can enter the Scoring Zone.
4. Penalty corners and Penalty Flicks will be replaced by a ‘Challenge’.

## Challenges

The procedure for a Challenge is as follows:

1. Time and play is stopped.
2. One attacking ball carrier starts with the ball 1-yard outside the Scoring Zone line, on the challenge marker.
3. One defending player is permitted.
  - a. The defender starts 2 yards inside the Scoring Zone line, on the defensive challenge marker. As soon as the ball has been played by the attacking player, the defending player is permitted to move. The defender still plays as an outfield player and can only use his/her stick to play the ball.
4. All other players must position themselves on the half way line.
5. When the attacker and defender are in place, the whistle is blown.
6. As soon as the attacker plays the ball, all players are permitted to re-engage, attempt to play the ball and open play resumes as normal.
7. If an intentional foul is committed:
  - a. By the attacker, then the defense is awarded a free-hit
  - b. By the appointed defender, then the Challenge will be re-set

## Duration

Match duration can be flexible to suit circumstances.

1. The standard recommendation for game time is 24 minutes. This can be split as either:
  - a. Two, 12-minute halves, with a 4-minute halftime break (Total = 28 minutes)
  - b. Four quarters of 6 minutes, with a 1-minute tactical quarter break and a 4-minute halftime break (Total = 30 minutes)
2. For tournament structures, to fit in more games, the following can be used:
  - a. Two, 6-minute halves with a 3-minute halftime break (Total = 15 minutes)

## Officiating

1. All competitions are expected to have at least one umpire per game. There are also the following recommendations:
  - a. High level competitions are strongly recommended to have two umpires per game.
  - b. Social sessions can be self-umpired unless it becomes apparent that an umpire is needed.

# NOTES

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