



PCA Rules of Play

YEAR ONE FOUNDING EDITION - DRAFT FOR FINAL REVIEW

The PCA uses familiar competitive cornhole standards so players can move between clubs and events without relearning the game. These rules establish a consistent Pennsylvania baseline while preserving reasonable format flexibility for Directors.

1. Scope and Authority

- These rules apply to PCA-sanctioned Club, District, State, and Keystone Cup competition unless an approved event format specifically states otherwise.
- Event formats may change bracket style, round count, partner selection, or advancement method. They may not change core gameplay rules without PCA approval.
- The hosting Director has first authority over routine match rulings. Escalated disputes follow PCA leadership and appeal procedures.
- PCA rules are intended to protect fair competition, not create unnecessary technical penalties.

2. Equipment Standards

Professional-Quality Boards

Item	PCA Standard
Playing surface	Professional-quality wooden cornhole board, nominally 24 in. x 48 in.
Hole	6 in. diameter, centered 9 in. from the back edge and 12 in. from each side
Front height	Approximately 3-4 in.
Rear height	Approximately 12 in.
Surface	Smooth, consistent, stable, and free of defects or foreign substances that materially alter play
Placement	27 ft. front edge to front edge for standard adult competition

Legal Bags

- Any legitimate professional-league stamped bag is legal for PCA play unless damaged, altered, or specifically ruled unsafe or noncompliant.
- Commercially manufactured pro-style resin-filled bags may also be used when they are consistent with normal competitive size, weight, construction, and performance expectations.
- A player must use a matching set of four bags for a game. A set may be replaced only for damage or another approved reason.
- Bags may not be restitched, refilled, chemically treated, coated, sanded, heated, ironed, or otherwise altered to change performance.
- Powders, sprays, tack products, or other foreign substances may not be applied to bags or boards.
- A Director may inspect equipment before or during competition when a reasonable challenge is raised.

Pennsylvania Preferred Bag Program - Year Two Option

- PCA may introduce an optional Pennsylvania Preferred designation for qualifying bag manufacturers beginning in Year Two.
- The designation will not be required for PCA play and will not replace nationally stamped or otherwise legal pro-style bags.
- The purpose is to give smaller Pennsylvania manufacturers an affordable path to demonstrate a consistent state-approved product.
- Any testing or approval fee will be minimal and intended only to cover administration. The program is not intended as a major PCA revenue source.

OPEN DECISION - UNSTAMPED PRO-STYLE BAG TOLERANCES

- Final measurable size, weight, thickness, and inspection tolerances for unstamped pro-style bags will be approved before the season.
- The standard will be designed to recognize normal professional manufacturing variation without allowing homemade or materially altered equipment.



3. Court Setup and Match Start

- Boards are placed 27 ft. apart, measured front edge to front edge.
- The front edge of each board is the foul line.
- A normal pitcher box extends alongside each board. Players must release the bag from the proper side and may not cross the foul line before release.
- Courts should provide safe footing and reasonable clearance. Known low ceilings, obstructions, or unusual court conditions should be disclosed before play when practical.
- Players are responsible for confirming the correct opponent, court, score settings, and format before beginning.

OPEN DECISIONS - MATCH START

- First-pitch procedure: final method for determining first throw and/or lane choice.
- Warm-up: final number of practice throws or down-and-back warm-up allowed before a match.
- Bag color conflict: final priority procedure when opponents arrive with sets that are difficult to distinguish.

4. Standard Gameplay and Scoring

Rule	Standard
Bags per frame	Each player throws four bags. Opponents alternate throws.
Bag in hole	3 points
Bag on board	1 point
Dead / off board	0 points
Frame score	Cancellation scoring. Only the net difference is added to the game score.
Winning score	First player or team to reach or exceed 21 after a completed frame wins.
Bust rule	No bust rule unless a non-points specialty event clearly advertises one in advance.

Scoring a Frame

- Players should agree on the frame score before removing bags whenever there is any doubt.
- A bag may not be intentionally moved before the frame is scored and agreed upon.
- If scoring is disputed, bags should remain in place until the Director or designated official makes a ruling.
- Electronic or manual scorekeeping may be used. The players remain responsible for confirming the correct score during the match.

5. Pitching Rules

- Bags are delivered underhand from the appropriate pitcher box.
- The bag must be released before the player steps beyond the foul line.
- Players alternate throws until all eight bags in the frame have been delivered.
- Once lanes/sides are established for a game, players remain in their assigned lane unless correcting an obvious setup error or receiving an official accommodation.
- Players should maintain a reasonable pace of play and be ready to throw when it is their turn.

OPEN DECISION - PITCH CLOCK

- PCA will finalize whether a formal pitch clock is required, the time limit, and when timing is enforced during normal and championship play.



6. Fouls and Dead Bags

A foul or dead bag scores zero and should be removed when its status could affect later bags.

- The player crosses the foul line before releasing the bag.
- The bag contacts the ground before reaching the board, including a bounce from the floor onto the board.
- The bag contacts an unintended obstruction before reaching the board.
- The bag comes to rest touching the ground while supported by the board.
- The player intentionally throws from the wrong pitcher box or continues from the wrong lane after being corrected.
- The bag or board is intentionally manipulated while live bags remain in play.
- A bag is otherwise ruled dead by the Director because of an equipment failure or unusual circumstance.

Live Bags and Hanging Bags

- Players may not touch, lift, slide, or remove live bags until the frame is complete and the score is settled.
- A bag scores 3 points only when it fully falls through the hole. A bag that is hanging, pinched, or partially extending into the hole remains a 1-point bag unless it fully drops through.
- If scored bags have accumulated beneath the hole in a way that is physically preventing a hanging bag from falling, an independent person designated by the Director will carefully clear the obstructing bags from underneath the hole without intentionally touching or moving the hanging bag. The hanging bag is then allowed to settle naturally. If it fully falls through, it scores 3 points. If it remains hanging, it scores 1 point.

7. Damaged Equipment and Equipment Challenges

- A damaged or broken bag may be replaced with a comparable legal set. Players should not mix individual replacement bags when a full replacement set is reasonably available.
- If a board becomes unsafe, unstable, wet, damaged, or materially inconsistent, play should stop until the Director corrects the condition or moves the match.
- Equipment challenges should be made before play whenever possible. A challenge made only after a poor result may be denied unless a genuine safety or integrity issue exists.
- Directors may remove any bag or board that is clearly altered, unsafe, damaged, or outside the PCA standard.

8. Match Administration

- Players must report results accurately and promptly using the event scoring system.
- Obvious scoring-entry mistakes should be corrected as soon as they are discovered.
- A completed match may be reopened only for a verified reporting error, rule violation, or other circumstance approved by the Director.
- Players may not create duplicate accounts, falsify identity or statistics, or intentionally manipulate registration, classification, seeding, or standings data.
- Event Directors may use random seeding, PCA seeding, Swiss, round robin, double elimination, Switcholio, Blind Draw, or other approved formats as defined by the event level and PCA roadmap.



9. Sportsmanship and Competitive Integrity

- Players, Directors, and spectators are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that protects fair competition and the reputation of the event.
- Cheating, intentional score manipulation, equipment tampering, threats, fighting, harassment, or deliberate disruption of play may result in removal from an event and additional PCA review.
- Normal competitive conversation and celebration are allowed. Conduct becomes actionable when it materially interferes with an opponent, event staff, or safe operation of the event.
- Directors should apply rules consistently and avoid creating event-specific interpretations that conflict with the published PCA rulebook.

10. Officials, Disputes, and Appeals

- Most PCA matches are player-officiated. Players should resolve routine scoring and gameplay questions respectfully when the answer is clear.
- A Director or designated official should be called before bags are moved when a ruling could affect the score or outcome.
- The Director ruling controls the immediate match unless PCA leadership determines that an extraordinary correction is required.
- Conference and State leadership may review significant rules disputes, player/director discipline, or issues not addressed by the published rules.
- The PCA Player Board will have authority over formal player appeals under the final appeals policy.

OPEN DECISION - DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS

- The Director Board and Player Board will finalize the progressive discipline process, appeal deadlines, voting procedure, and penalties before the season.
- Serious integrity or safety issues may still require immediate event removal before a formal appeal is heard.

11. Accessibility and Special Circumstances

- Reasonable accommodations should be made for players with disabilities when they can be provided without creating an unfair competitive advantage.
- Junior, Women's, Senior, Premier, and skill-tier events use the same core gameplay rules unless a published event provision states otherwise.
- Unexpected venue, weather, equipment, or safety conditions may require a Director to pause, relocate, shorten, or otherwise adjust an event. Any adjustment should prioritize fairness and player safety.

12. Rulebook Governance

- Year One is a founding season. Minor clarifications may be issued when an unforeseen situation exposes a genuine gap in the rules.
- Material in-season changes should be limited to issues necessary for fairness, safety, or league operation.
- The Director Board and Player Board will review Year One before recommending Year Two changes.
- The current rulebook will be posted publicly on the PCA website and should be treated as the controlling version for PCA-sanctioned competition.

ITEMS TO RESOLVE BEFORE THE SEASON

- Exact measurable tolerances for unstamped pro-style bags.
- First-pitch and lane-choice procedure.
- Warm-up allowance before matches.
- Bag color conflict procedure.
- Formal pitch clock and enforcement.
- Final discipline and appeals procedure.

This founding rulebook is intentionally concise. PCA event formats, standings, membership, qualification, and points policies are governed by the separate PCA Year One roadmap and published event requirements.