

Guidelines for Adjusting the Rules

As an official, seeing that Youth Sports games are played by the rules is one of your most important duties. This is necessary for fair play, positive competition, safety, and enjoyment.

That said, the rulebook does not stand carved in stone. On occasion, and always for the benefit of the children's athletic development, safety, or enjoyment, you may need to make minimal adjustments to the rules. When you do, follow these guidelines:

1. Keep in mind that the YMCA has already modified the rules for the benefit of the children. So stick with the rulebook unless you know something about the skill level or special needs of the children would cause you to adjust them.
2. Keep adjustments to the rules to the minimum necessary. This will reduce the chances of confusing players and coaches and of unintentionally degrading the quality of the game.
3. The most useful modifications will likely relate to level of tolerance you will have before calling a violation. For example, in a basketball game involving children who are still learning to dribble, calling traveling every 30 seconds will injure the flow of the game. Consider raising your threshold of tolerance for traveling, but do so uniformly.
4. If you adjust a rule, do so in conference with the other officials. Consider involving the coaches in this discussion.
5. Make sure that all concerned parties are aware of and understand the rule modification.
6. Once the adjusted rules are agreed upon, they become "the rules" and are to be applied correctly and consistently.