
2026–27 IHSA Shot Clock

Rules & Protocol

Shot Clock Rules, Reset Logic & AP Arrow Determinations

Audience: Officials, Coaches & Administrators

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SECTION 1 — SCOPE & APPLICABILITY

The IHSA adopted the 35-second shot clock and 20-second reset in accordance with **NFHS Rule 2-14**. The shot clock is used for the **entire game**, including extra periods.

Level of Play

- **Mandatory — Varsity:** Regular season, regular season tournaments, shootout games, and the IHSA State Tournament series.
- **Lower-level contests:** Decision left to conferences and individual schools.
- **Non-conference lower-level games:** Both schools must agree in advance.

- The IHSA Board of Directors-adopted model rule must be followed in all cases.
- All IHSA varsity contests follow NFHS shot clock rules (*NFHS Rules Book* pp. 77–79) with IHSA State Association Adoptions as described herein.

Additional Applicability Notes

- **Mercy Rule:** When in effect, shot clock use continues.
- **Coaches Box:** 28 feet in length.

SECTION 2 — EQUIPMENT & INSTALLATION

★ STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTION #4 — Shot Clock Installation Requirements

A school may **not host** a varsity contest if the shot clocks are not installed or is not properly mounted on the backboard in the primary gym in accordance with NFHS rules. The host school must secure an alternate facility or allow the opponent to host the contest. If the host school is unable to secure a gym with functioning shot clocks and the opposing school cannot host, the **game shall be forfeited by the home team**.

NOTE 1: When a school hosts a tournament or shootout utilizing multiple gyms, and a traditional backboard-mounted shot clock is not feasible in an auxiliary gym, shot clocks must be mounted on the wall behind the basket, at or above the backboard, and must be clearly visible and unobstructed.

NOTE 2: A varsity game cannot begin unless both shot clocks are functioning properly. If either shot clock is not working, and the clocks are properly mounted, the game must be postponed or moved to another gym with functioning shot clocks.

FIELD NOTE — Improperly Mounted Shot Clocks

Q: Shot clocks are mounted on top of the backboard (not recessed). What should officials do?

A: Per State Association Adoption #4, a school may not host a varsity contest if a shot clock is not properly mounted per NFHS rules. The host school must secure an alternate facility or allow the opponent to host. If neither option is possible, the game shall be forfeited by the home team. Officials who become aware of improperly installed shot clocks should **notify IHSA administration immediately** (email Chris and Beth).

Positioning Requirements

- **Primary Gym:** Shot clock must be recessed and mounted on the supports behind each backboard.
- **Auxiliary Gym:** Wall-mounted behind the basket at or above backboard height; clearly visible and unobstructed.
- Both shot clocks must be in working order to start the game.

Display Guidelines

- LED lights on the **shot clock** → designate expiration of the shot clock period **ONLY**.

- LED lights on the **backboard** → designate end of each quarter or overtime period **ONLY**.
- LED lights on the backboard **DO NOT** illuminate on expiration of the shot clock period.
- LED lights are not mandatory (*NFHS Rules* p. 74).
- **IHSA Recommendation:** Do **NOT** display tenths of a second on the shot clock.

Shot Clock Horn

- Must have a sound **DISTINCT and DIFFERENT** from the game-clock horn.
- The shot clock horn does **NOT stop play** unless recognized by an official's whistle.
- Officials make the final determination when there is doubt regarding a shot-clock violation.
- If horn sounds cannot be made distinct: officials must rely on the game clock display, shot clock display, and the official's whistle - not the horn alone. Schools must correct this equipment issue.

FIELD NOTE — Identical Horn Sounds

Q: The shot clock horn sounds the same as the game-clock horn. What should officials do?

A: NFHS guidelines require the shot clock horn to be distinct and different from the game-clock horn. If school equipment cannot produce distinct sounds, officials must rely on the game clock display, shot clock display, and the official's whistle - not the horn alone - to determine violations. The shot clock horn does **NOT** stop play unless recognized by an official's whistle. Schools must correct this equipment deficiency. Notify IHSA administration when horn sounds cannot be distinguished.

Backup Equipment (Required at Scorer's Table)

- Alternate timing device (stopwatch/cell phone timer).
- Alternate sound device (air horn or device producing a distinct sound).
- If one shot clock fails during the game: turn off **BOTH** and use the alternate procedure (e.g., announcer counts down from 10 seconds).

SECTION 3 — SHOT CLOCK OPERATOR (SCO)

- The SCO must be **seated next to the timer** at the scorer's and timer's table.
- The SCO controls a separate timing device with a distinct-sounding horn.
- The SCO must have an alternate timing device and alternate sound device available at all times.

SECTION 4 — STARTING THE SHOT CLOCK

Start the Shot Clock When:

1. The ball touches or is legally touched by a player on the court on a throw-in.
2. A team gains initial control after a jump ball or an unsuccessful try for a goal.
3. There is a change in team control.

Turn Off the Shot Clock When:

- The game clock is **equal to or less than** the shot clock period.

SECTION 5 — SHOT CLOCK VIOLATION

The team in control must attempt a try for a field goal within the **35-second shot clock period**.

A Try for Goal Is Valid When:

- The ball has left the shooter's hand(s) **before** the sounding of the shot clock horn, **AND**
- The ball subsequently strikes the ring, flange, or enters the basket.

It Is a Violation When:

- A try for goal does not leave the shooter's hand(s) before expiration, **OR**
- It leaves the hand(s) before expiration but does not subsequently strike the ring, flange, or enter the basket.

Official's Signal for Violation:

Stop signal → Tap the head (Signal Chart #41) → Directional signal → Designate throw-in spot nearest to ball at time of violation.

SECTION 6 — SHOT CLOCK RESET TIERS

TIER 1 — NO RESET (Leave Unexpired Time on Clock)

- Ball deflected out of bounds by the defense — offense retains possession.
- Defense causes a kicked/fisted ball violation in frontcourt when the shot clock is **AT or ABOVE 20 seconds**.

- Player injured or loses a contact lens.
- Either team calls a timeout.
- Shot attempt does **NOT** contact the rim/flange **AND** results in a held ball **AND** the AP arrow favors the shooting team (offense).
- Defense fouls and offense retains ball in frontcourt with the shot clock **AT or ABOVE 20 seconds**.
- Any double personal foul or double technical foul when the offense retains possession.
- Held ball during team control when the AP arrow favors the offense (team in control).
- Inadvertent whistle when team control existed at the time of the whistle.

TIER 2 — RESET TO 20 SECONDS OR TIME REMAINING, WHICHEVER IS GREATER

(Used when clock is below 20 — never reduces the clock if it is already 20 or above.)

- Personal or technical foul committed by the defensive team (prior to a try for goal) and the ball is to be inbounded in the frontcourt by the offense.
- Kicked or fisted ball violation by the defensive team, and the ball is to be inbounded in the frontcourt by the offense (clock below 20).
- Inadvertent whistle when there was **NO** player or team possession at the time of the whistle, and the AP arrow favors either team for a throw-in in its frontcourt.

TIER 3 — RESET TO 20 SECONDS

- Offense gains control in the frontcourt after an unsuccessful field goal attempt that **contacts the ring or flange**.
- Offense gains control after an unsuccessful free throw that remains in play in frontcourt.
- Defense is assessed a foul after an unsuccessful free throw that remains in play, or after an unsuccessful field goal that contacts the ring or flange, or during a successful try — provided the offense will inbound in the frontcourt.
- Defense causes the ball to go out of bounds in the frontcourt following an unsuccessful free throw or unsuccessful field goal attempt that contacts the ring or flange.
- No team control; offense awarded possession in their frontcourt via AP arrow following an unsuccessful free throw or unsuccessful field goal that hits the rim.
- A violation occurs (other than an opponent causing OOB or kicking/fisting the ball) and the defense is awarded the ball in its frontcourt.
- After any double personal foul when **ONLY ONE** foul is intentional or flagrant and the offended team is awarded possession in its frontcourt.
- After a shot that contacts the rim/flange is batted into the backcourt and OOB by the shooting team — defense gains possession in their frontcourt.
- Held ball in the frontcourt: AP arrow favors the defense for a **FRONTCOURT** throw-in.

- Offensive violation (travel, 3 seconds, etc.) - defense awarded ball for throw-in in their frontcourt per normal rules - reset to :20.
- Offensive foul — defense awarded ball in backcourt - reset to :20.

★ NEW —

Ball hits the rim on a pass or deflection and is recovered by the offense in the **FRONTCOURT**

★ NEW —

Ball lodged between the rim and backboard - AP arrow awards possession to the offense

★ NEW —

Ball goes out of bounds from the opening jump ball or OT jump before either team gains possession

AND

the resulting throw-in is in the **FRONTCOURT**

TIER 4 — RESET TO 35 SECONDS

- Defense causes a kicked/fisted ball violation in backcourt - reset to 35.
- Change in team control during a live ball (steal, turnover) - wait for **ACTUAL possession** before resetting.
- Defensive rebound after any field goal attempt (whether or not the shot contacted the rim/flange).
- Offensive violation (travel, 3 seconds, etc.) - defense awarded ball for throw-in in their backcourt per normal rules - reset to 35.
- Offensive foul — defense awarded ball in backcourt - reset to 35.
- Defensive player causes a held ball during the offensive team's team control in the frontcourt, **AND** the AP arrow favors the defensive team for a throw-in in the **BACKCOURT**.
- Single foul occurring in the backcourt — defense awarded ball; reset to 35; new 10-second count.
- Ball out of bounds by the offense in the backcourt - defense receives ball; reset to :35.
- Defense causes a kicked/fisted ball violation in backcourt - reset to :35

- Offense gains control after an unsuccessful free throw that remains in play in backcourt reset to :35.

★ NEW —

Ball hits the rim on a pass or deflection and is recovered by the offense in the BACKCOURT reset to 35 seconds.

★ NEW —

Single technical foul called: set shot clock to 35 seconds after the official reports the foul and before the throw-in at the division line.

★ NEW —

Ball goes out of bounds from the opening jump ball or OT jump before either team gains possession

AND

the resulting throw-in is in the BACKCOURT

SECTION 7 — AP ARROW (ALTERNATING POSSESSION) LOGIC

Use the table below as a quick-reference matrix. Each scenario group is also described in detail beneath the table.

Situation	AP Favors	Location	Reset Action
Held ball during team control (defense causes)	Offense	Any	NO RESET
Defense	Frontcourt throw-in	Reset to 20 sec.	
Defense	Backcourt throw-in	Reset to 35 sec.	
Shot/FT hits the rim (loose ball — no team control)	Offense	Frontcourt	Reset to 20 sec.
Defense	Any	Reset to 35 sec.	
Shot does NOT hit the rim (no team control)	Offense (shooting team)	Any	NO RESET
Defense	Any	Reset to 35 sec.	
Inadvertent whistle (no team control at time of whistle)	Either team	Frontcourt throw-in	Reset to 20 sec. (or time remaining, whichever is greater)
Either team	Backcourt throw-in	Reset to 35 sec.	
Inadvertent whistle (team control existed at time of whistle)	N/A	Any	NO RESET
★ NEW — Lodged ball (wedged between rim and backboard)	Offense	Any	Reset to 20 sec.
Defense	Any	Reset to 35 sec.	

During Team Control — Defensive Player Causes a Held Ball

- AP favors **OFFENSE** → **NO RESET**
- AP favors **DEFENSE** → throw-in in **FRONT COURT** → **Reset to 20 seconds**
- AP favors **DEFENSE** → throw-in in **BACK COURT** → **Reset to 35 seconds**

After a Shot/Free Throw That Hits the Rim (No Team Control — Loose Ball)

- AP favors **OFFENSE** → **Reset to 20 seconds**
- AP favors **DEFENSE** → **Reset to 35 seconds**

After a Shot/Free Throw That Does NOT Hit the Rim (No Team Control)

- AP favors **OFFENSE** (shooting team) → **NO RESET**
- AP favors **DEFENSE** → **Reset to 35 seconds**

Inadvertent Whistle — No Team Control at Time of Whistle

- Throw-in in **frontcourt** → **Reset to 20 seconds** (or time remaining, whichever greater)
- Throw-in in **backcourt** → **Reset to 35 seconds**

Inadvertent Whistle — Team Control Existed at Time of Whistle

- **NO RESET**

★ NEW — Lodged Ball (wedged between rim and backboard)

- AP favors **OFFENSE** → Reset to 20 seconds
- AP favors **DEFENSE** → Reset to 35 seconds

SECTION 8 — BACKCOURT RULES

10-Second Backcourt Count

- Officials do **NOT** use a visible 10-second count in the backcourt.
- The **shot clock governs** the 10-second backcourt count.
- **ANY** official may call the 10-second backcourt violation when it occurs.

★ NEW —

When the ball is knocked out of bounds in the backcourt, the offensive team receives a **NEW** 10-second period

Example:

If the shot clock displays :29 at throw-in time, the 10-second violation occurs when the shot clock reaches :19.

5-Second Closely Guarded Count (Frontcourt Only)

- Officials use a **VISIBLE count** to administer the 5-second “hold” situation in the frontcourt when using the shot clock.

SECTION 9 — TIMING ERRORS & MALFUNCTIONS

- Officials make the final determination when there is doubt whether a score was made within the shot clock period, or whether a try for goal contacted the ring or flange.
- When an obvious mistake by the SCO has occurred (failure to start, stop, set, or reset the clock properly), or when a shot clock has malfunctioned, the mistake or result may be corrected **DURING the shot clock period in which it occurred** - only when the official has **definite information** relative to the mistake and the time involved.
- If the shot clock is off (under :35 or :20) or there is a shot clock malfunction, officials **MUST** use a visible backcourt ten-second count.

QUICK-REFERENCE SUMMARY — RESET TIER AT A GLANCE

Tier	Reset To	Triggered By
1	NO RESET	Timeout, player injury, defense deflects OOB, defense fouls with ≥ 20 sec, inadvertent whistle with team control, AP favors offense on held ball or non-rim shot.
2	20 sec or time remaining (whichever is greater)	Defense fouls or kicks/fists ball with < 20 sec in frontcourt and :35 sec reset in backcourt; inadvertent whistle with no team control $\rightarrow$ frontcourt throw-in.
3	20 seconds	Offense gains frontcourt control after shot hits rim/FT remains in play; defense fouls after rim contact; AP to offense after rim contact; held ball $\rightarrow$ defense takes frontcourt; If the offensive foul or violation results in a frontcourt throw-in for the new offense. Defensive foul in the frontcourt above or at :20 means not reset. ★ NEW: rim hit on pass, lodged ball to offense, jump ball OOB $\rightarrow$ frontcourt.
4	35 seconds	Live-ball change of control; defensive rebound; offensive violation/foul ; AP to defense in backcourt; backcourt fouls/OOB; ★ NEW: rim hit on pass to backcourt, single technical foul; Jump ball OOB $\rightarrow$ backcourt jump ball OOB $\rightarrow$ backcourt" is referring to a backcourt throw-in after a jump ball to begin a game or an overtime period where there is no possession prior to the ball going out of bounds. All backcourt defensive fouls.