



2026-27 and 2027-28 Women's Bowling Rules Changes

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Women's Bowling Committee and Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules changes are effective with the 2026-27 season.

Rule	Change and Rationale
<p>1.1.d.2.c PENALTY</p>	<p>To permit student-athletes to use the warm-up pair after being removed from the current match; however, doing so would make them ineligible to re-enter that same match. If a student-athlete uses the warm-up pair and then re-enters the current match, all remaining frames for that lineup position will be scored as zero.</p> <p>Clarification on Re-Entry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-entry is permitted only in Baker Total Pinfall or Baker Match Play. • Re-entry is not permitted in traditional games. <p>Penalty for Illegal Re-Entry: If a student-athlete illegally re-enters a Traditional or Baker game within the same match in violation of Rule 4.6.b.1, all remaining frames in that lineup position shall be scored as zero for the remainder of the match.</p> <p>Substitution Provision: Any student-athlete who did not start the match may enter as a substitute in accordance with Rules 4.5 and 4.6.</p> <p>Rationale: Currently, if a student-athlete is removed from a match and subsequently uses a warm-up pair, they are assessed a penalty. Specifically, all remaining frames in that lineup position are scored as zero for the remainder of the match. This change will reduce excessively harsh penalties for honest mistakes while clearly defining consequences for illegal re-entry (use of the warm-up pair) into active competition.</p>
<p>New 2.1.a.5</p>	<p>To clarify bowling balls approved by the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) may be used following their approval date. https://bowl.com/approved-ball-list</p> <p>Rationale: To clarify bowling balls may be used as soon as they are approved and placed on the USBC list.</p>
<p>2.2 and 7.5</p>	<p>The altering of a bowling ball surface by water, cleaner, polish, or abrasives may be done <u>only before the conclusion of the first daily warmup session</u> of the day. If surface alterations are made, they shall be done to the entire ball. If a team receives a bye prior to its first match of the session, the team shall be permitted to alter the surface of the ball during their bye practice.</p> <p><u>The daily warmup session is the only practice period during which surface adjustments are allowed during competition.</u></p>

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	<p><u>If the tournament includes a break in play for reoilng and a second daily warmup session is held, surface alterations will again be permitted. All alterations must be completed before the end of that daily warmup session.</u></p> <p><u>Alteration of equipment is allowed prior to the start of the daily warmup session or following the conclusion of competition on Day 1 or 2.</u></p> <p><u>In the event of mechanical failure, which deprives the student-athlete possession of their equipment, relief can be granted by the Head Official for additional time to alter the surface of the ball.</u></p> <p>Rationale: This rule clearly defines when surface alterations are permitted and ensures consistency in application across all teams and sessions.</p>
7.7.g	<p>The Mega Match format is permitted to be used only during conference championships, the National Collegiate Championship and exhibition contests. <u>Winners will be determined by using a best-of-three match format in the following order: Baker total pinfall, five-person team match, and a best-of-seven Baker match play.</u></p> <p>Rationale: By breaking up the Baker formats, it alleviates any perceived potential momentum for a team that may be better in the Baker format.</p>
7.8.e and PENALTY	<p>To permit either lane (left or right) to roll the first ball of each game.</p> <p>Rationale: Currently, the team on the left lane must begin each game of the match. This change will increase pace of play.</p>
7.9.a.6	<p>All dead wood must be removed before the next delivery. Any delivery made with dead wood on the lane or in the gutter will be scored as a zero.</p> <p>Rationale: To avoid ambiguity by making clear that dead wood must be removed and to clarify the penalty for bowling with dead wood.</p>
New Rule – Video Review	<p>To clarify the use of lane-side video review during competition. Video review will be permitted for the following situations: scoring, fouls, legal pinfall and unsportsmanlike conduct. If video review is used, it must be available for all competition lanes. The original ruling will only be changed if there is indisputable video evidence to reverse the call. Absent that evidence, the original ruling will stand.</p>

Rule	Change and Rationale
	Rationale: In recent years, enhanced technology in multiple sports has led to the implementation of video review to assist with getting calls right and correcting errors. The rules have been silent on the use of video review, which has created inconsistencies in how video review is being used by institutions, conferences and tournaments.